

DIVORCEES' EXPERIENCES OF EMOTIONAL REGULATION WITHIN A CO-PARENTING RELATIONSHIP

Heske Sangster

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree

Master of Psychology

**In the Faculty of the Humanities
at the University of the Free State
Bloemfontein**

October 2021

Supervisor: Mrs. I. Kruger

Declaration

I, Heske Sangster, declare that this dissertation hereby submitted for the degree of Masters of Arts with specialisation in Psychology at the University of the Free State, is my own independent work and has not previously been submitted at another university/faculty. I further cede copyright of the dissertation in favour of the University of the Free State.



Heske Sangster

Acknowledgments

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the following individuals for their contribution to the successful completion of this dissertation:

- The research participants, for engaging in this study.
- My supervisors, Isna Kruger and Anja Botha, for their consistent support and guidance throughout this process. Thank you for the motivation and insightful contributions. Without you, this would not have been possible.
- My husband Warren Sangster and my daughter Sophia Sangster, for your continuous support throughout the process.
- My parents, for your loving support and continuous motivation.
- My Heavenly Father - without God this would not have been possible.

Reference: Mrs IS Kruger

Psychology Building, Room 106
University of the Free State
BLOEMFONTEIN
9301

Telephone: 051 – 401 3264

E-mail: krugeris@ufs.ac.za

18 October 2021

PERMISSION TO SUBMIT

Student: Mrs. Heske Sangster

Student number: 2008010660

Degree: Master of Social Science with specialisation in Psychology

Department: Psychology

Title: Divorcees' experiences of emotional regulation within a co-parenting relationship.

I hereby provide permission that this dissertation be submitted for examination – in fulfilment of the requirements for a Master's in Psychology, in the Department of Psychology, Faculty of the Humanities, at the University of the Free State.

I approve the submission for assessment and that the submitted work has not previously, either in part or in its entirety, been submitted to the examiners or moderators.

Kind regards.



Mrs Isna Kruger
Supervisor



SQUARE CLOUD
COMMUNICATIONS

<https://squarecloudkp.wixsite.com/karinpetersen>

Certificate

of Editing

AUTHOR: Heske Sangster

MANUSCRIPT TITLE: Divorcees' experiences of emotional regulation within a co-parenting relationship

DATE OF ISSUE: 8 February 2022

This certificate confirms that the manuscript listed above has been professionally proof read for grammar, spelling, phrasing, punctuation and sentence structure; and has offered contributions to intent of meaning. No alterations were made to intrinsic content. A copy of the document with editing mark-ups can be made available to the institution on request, with the written permission of the author. All edits and comments were made using the MS Word mark-up function, which afforded the author the power to accept or reject the editing submissions.

Karin Petersen

squarecloudkp@gmail.com

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Student Declaration	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Permission to Submit Dissertation	iv
Declaration by language editor	v
1. Chapter 1: Introduction	1
2. Chapter 2: Divorce and co-parenting	4
2.1 Divorce in South Africa	4
2.2 The process of divorce	5
2.3 Co-parenting	10
2.3.1 Co-parenting theories	11
2.4 Factors affecting post-divorce co-parenting	14
2.4.1 Inter-parental conflict	14
2.4.2 Parental Alienation	16
2.4.3 Other factors	16
3. Chapter 3: Emotional regulation	18
3.1 Introduction	18
3.2 History of Emotional regulation	18
3.3 Process model of emotional regulation	19
3.4 Emotional regulation strategies	21
3.4.1 Situation selection and situation modification	21
3.4.2 Attentional deployment and cognitive change	22
3.4.3 Response modulation	23
3.5 The dynamics of emotional regulation	23
3.5.1 Automatic vs controlled emotional regulation	23
3.5.2 Intrinsic vs extrinsic emotional regulation	24
3.5.3 Up-regulation vs down-regulation	25
3.6 Emotional dysregulation and maladaptive regulatory strategies	26
3.7 Impact of context on emotional regulation	26
3.8 Conclusion	27
4. Chapter 4: Methodology	28
4.1 Introduction	28

4.2 Research question	28
4.3 Research design	28
4.4 Participants and sampling procedures	29
4.5 Data Collection	31
4.6 Data Analysis	32
4.7 Rigour and trustworthiness	34
4.8 Ethical considerations	35
4.9 Conclusion	36
5. Chapter 5: Findings	37
5.1 Introduction	37
5.2 Theme one: Avoidance	38
5.3 Theme two: Conceptual adjustments	41
5.4 Theme three: External behaviours	45
5.5 Conclusion	48
6. Chapter 6: Discussion and conclusion	49
6.1 Introduction	49
6.2 Discussion of findings	49
6.2.1 Avoidance	50
6.2.2 Conceptual adjustments	52
6.2.3 External behaviours	54
6.3 Limitations of this study	58
6.4 Future recommendations	58
References	60
Tables and figures	79
Abstract	81
Abstrak	82
Appendix A: Faculty of the Humanities Research Ethics Committee Approval Letter	83
Appendix B: Informed consent	84
Appendix C: Semi-structured interview questions	90
Appendix D: Plagiarism Report	92

1. Chapter 1: Introduction

The study aims to describe the experience of emotional regulation within divorced co-parents. According to Statistics South Africa (2019), at the end of December 2019, 25 284 divorces were completed in South Africa. Between 2012 and 2019 the divorce rate in South Africa displayed a steady increase. Statistics further indicate that of the 25 284 divorces that were completed, more than half (56,6%) of them affected children under the age of 18 (Statistics South Africa, 2019). Divorce has been described as a time-consuming and difficult process, with both emotional and legal components. It has been rated the second most stressful and difficult occurrence following the death of a spouse (Allen & Hawkins, 2017). When viewing divorce in the light of the aforementioned it is thus expected that co-parenting after a divorce might pose a challenge for divorcees.

Co-parenting refers to the practice by which separated or divorced parents coordinate child-rearing practices and consist of numerous dynamics (Lamela et al., 2016). Feinberg (2003) proposed that co-parenting consists of four distinctive components: support vs undermining; child rearing agreement vs disagreement; division of child-rearing tasks, as well as the coordination of family relationships. There is, however, little agreement on the dynamics of co-parenting in literature resources (Hock & Mooradian, 2013 & deMartini et al., 2017). It is further postulated that the co-parenting relationship can be negatively influenced by the context in which it occurs, especially in a high conflict divorce and when divorcees are unable to agree on co-parenting tasks (Stahl, 2008).

It is well known that the co-parenting relationship between divorcees has a significant impact on the emotional wellbeing of children of divorce (Stahl, 2008). Literature suggests that a high-conflict and undermining co-parenting relationship might have negative outcomes for children involved (Visser et al., 2017).

Emotional regulation is generally defined as the process in which individuals attempt to control the intensity, duration and expressive behaviour concerning an emotion (Gross & Thompson, 2007). The goal of the regulatory process is not to replace a

negative emotion with a positive one, but rather to influence the dynamics of an emotion in order to ensure an appropriate response within the contextual demands of a situation (Aldoa, 2013). People regulate both positive and negative emotions (Koole, 2009). It is further hypothesised that most emotions experienced by people are exposed to some degree of emotional regulation.

This research study focused on divorced co-parents' experience of emotional regulation in order to gain insight into this phenomenon. It is hypothesised that if divorced co-parents can gain insights into their emotional regulation processes, then they can learn to co-parent more effectively; which in turn can have a positive influence on the children's emotional wellbeing.

A search through Ebscohost (2021) revealed limited literature on divorced co-parents' experience of emotional regulation. One such study suggests that successful emotional regulation, within the context of divorced co-parents, depends on an individual's ability to make use of an array of emotional regulation strategies (Willen, 2015). The current study made use of the Process model of emotional regulation Gross (1998) to describe and make sense of the participants' experiences of emotional regulation. The model is grounded on the modal model of emotions which conceptualises emotions as a four-step process (Gross, 2015). Firstly, an emotion-provoking experience (which may be external or internal) occurs, followed by attending to, and evaluating, the experience. The last step includes the individual's response; which may be physical, behavioural and experiential in nature (Naragon-Gainey et al., 2017).

Due to the complex and unique nature of the constructs utilised in this study, a qualitative research design was employed, with the aim of gaining in-depth and authentic experiences from the participants. In order to ensure that the real-life phenomenon is understood from different lenses, a multiple, single case study design was consequently employed. According to Crowe et al. (2011) and Yin (2012), case studies are an established qualitative research design which are particularly suited to fields within the social sciences such as psychology; the reason predominantly being the capacity of case studies to facilitate an in-depth understanding of intricate issues as they occur in the real-life context. A multiple, single case study design furthermore allows the researcher to simultaneously analyse several cases in order to understand

the differences and similarities between contextually-comparable cases (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Each participant constituted a case, providing a different perspective on their experiences of emotional regulation within the co-parenting relationship. Participants' experiences were compared and differences and similarities noted. Conclusions were drawn from the retrieved data and each participant's viewpoint and experiences were utilised to validate the conclusions (Vohra, 2014). Purposive sampling, as put forward in Nishishiba et al. (2014), was utilised to recruit participants. This type of sampling enables the researcher to select participants ensuring that relevant information concerning the specific topic will be retrieved. The population consisted of divorcees who are in a co-parenting relationship with one or more children under the age of 18. The study focused on individuals' experiences, and not on the couple as a unit. The transcribed interviews conducted with each participant was analysed using thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998, Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Social science researchers most frequently make use of the thematic analysis method when analysing data (Alswaari, 2014). Thematic analysis organizes and codes data into detailed themes and subthemes. A theme represents significant information related to the research question and provides patterns of meaning within the data (Robson, 2011). Furthermore, an inductive process in relation to thematic analysis was used. Such a process ensures that the coding of data takes place without imposing any pre-existing analytic assumptions by the researcher (Alswaari, 2014).

Various themes were identified during the above-mentioned process. Findings indicated that the divorced co-parents made use of a variety of antecedent and response-focused emotional regulation strategies, which are discussed in the final chapter of this study. Some of the emotional regulation strategies were functional and conducive to the co-parenting relationship, whilst others did not seem to promote the co-parenting relationship.

2. Chapter 2: Divorce and co-parenting

2.1 Divorce in South Africa

The phenomenon of divorce is prevalent in South Africa with data showing a steady increase in divorces. Most divorce cases in South Africa includes children below the age of 18 (Statistics South Africa, 2019). This is concerning as it is suggested that divorce and divorce related proceedings brings about emotional turmoil for all parties involved including the adults and children involved (Allen & Hawkins, 2017).

The emotional process may last anything between a few years or a lifetime, as the idea of getting a divorce usually originates a substantial amount of time prior to the legal divorce (Pryor & Trinder, 2004). The legal divorce can be described as the moment where a judge grants the marital dissolution decree.

South Africa makes use of a no-fault divorce system that implies that no one is to “blame” for the divorce (Divorce Act 70 of 1979). Statistics South Africa (2019) established that women were more likely to initiate the divorce process than men and that 44, 3% of the finalised divorced cases occurred before the 10th marriage anniversary. The divorce phenomenon is prevalent in South Africa and its far-reaching effects on those involved can therefore no longer be overlooked and should receive the attention it requires.

According to the General Household Survey conducted by Statistics South Africa (2020), approximately one fifth of children in South Africa do not reside with their biological parents. About 34.2 % of households were classified as extended households where grandparents are the main caregivers. Only a small percentage of children reside with both parents. This is suggested to have a detrimental impact on a child’s attachment with the non-resident parent which is also suggested to have a negative impact on the child’s self-esteem and relationships later on in life (Davies, 2012).

In the South African context, various custody arrangements are prevalent following a divorce (Statistics South Africa, 2019). Some parents make use of a relevant new concept called “bird nesting parenting”. This custody arrangement allows the child to remain in the family home whilst both parents alternate living with the child in the family home. It is postulated to have positive outcomes for the child as the child remains in a familiar surrounding which provides safety and security (Lehtme & Toros, 2019).

2.2 The process of divorce:

A search on Ebscohost (2021) indicated that an abundance of literature exists on divorce and that these include studies on predictors of divorce, divorce and the wellbeing of partners and children of divorce, as well as divorce-focused interventions (Allen & Hawkins, 2017; Collardeau & Ehrenberg, 2016; Kalmijn, 2013; Van Tilburg et al., 2015).

Recent studies are more interested in describing the dynamics pertaining to the divorce, such as the relevant demographic and social factors, cohabitating partners and same-sex marriages, than on the process or event as such (Asanjarani et al., 2017 & Harkonen, 2014). Typically, these theories describing the process of divorce are grounded in psychological, sociological and grieving concepts (Allen & Hawkins, 2017). Although these theories might be outdated, cognisance should be taken of them as they assist us in understanding the complex dynamics at play during a divorce.

One of the first models that attempted to describe the divorce process was that of Waller (1938) - proposing four stages of divorce: breaking old habits; commencing with the renewal of life; in quest of something new to love and reformation accomplished. Typical of the early theorists, remarriage was viewed as part of the adjustment phase. Initial theories of divorce typically incorporated remarriage as part of the divorce recovery process (Amato, 2010). This view is however seen as outdated and recent literature does not view remarriage as part of successful divorce adjustment (Alpaslan, 2018).

In 1970 Bohannon conceptualised six stages of divorce. The process commences with the emotional divorce - during this stage the couple are cognisant of a dissatisfaction in the marital relationship. The second stage comprises the legal divorce where legal aspects of the marital dissolution commence. The third stage entails the economic divorce, which attends to the financial aspects of the legal divorce such as maintenance and division of assets. The co-parenting divorce is enmeshed with the economic divorce. Although the marital relationship is no longer deemed to be legal the parental relationship as well as parental responsibilities remain (Bohannon, 1970). Following the latter is the community divorce which describes the stage where the divorcee needs to deal with feelings of loneliness as previous social relationships may deteriorate. Bohannon (1970) defines the last stage, the psychic divorce, as the most difficult, as the divorcee attends to issues related to the self and the construction of a new sense of the divorced self.

Kessler (1975) differentiated between seven stages of divorce. These stages commence with a feeling of disillusionment, where a spouse becomes conscious that the marital experience does not fulfil the expectations of marriage. The following stage is the erosion phase which refers to further degrading in the quality of the relationship. Detachment follows the erosion phase and is mainly characterised by a diminished commitment to the marriage as well as a lack of interest in the spouse Kessler, 1975. Kessler (1975) suggests that spouses rarely reach this phase simultaneously, which in turn aggravates the emotional disconnection between partners. The fourth phase entails the physical separation of spouses. During this phase one of the partners is no longer able to remain in the marriage and moves out. This phase is suggested as the most traumatic phase and spouses usually commence with the legal phase of divorce by seeking an attorney. The fifth phase is characterised by mourning of several losses due to the divorce. A phase described as second adolescence by Kessler marks the divorcee's time of healing and renewing of the self. The final phase of hard work is a phase where the divorcee finds a new identity and is ready to direct the new lifestyle into a successful direction (Kessler, 1975).

Kübler-Ross's five stages of grief (1969); denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance, were initially utilised in understanding the process of divorce. Steefel (1992) expanded on Kübler-Ross's theory and introduced the divorce transition model. The model entails four stages of transition: firstly, the divorcee experiences

shock and denial; secondly, anger and depression as well as the acceptance of the new reality. The third phase includes challenging new behaviours and internalisations. The final stage entails formation of new attitudes (Steefel,1992). However, recent theorists no longer compare divorce to Kübler-Ross 's five stages of grief (Asaranjani et al. 2017).

When considering the above models, it can be postulated that adjustment to divorce is seen as a complex process which may vary in emotional experiences and duration. Most of the theories on divorce include a component of emotional turmoil, trauma and adjustments. Specifically, Kübler-Ross (1967) and Steefel (1992)'s theories provide insight into the importance of mourning during divorce, by emphasising the losses a divorcee experiences.

Kaslow (1980) established a Dialectic Model of divorce, integrating the emotions, behaviour and tasks that an individual would need to complete in order to gain optimal functioning after a divorce. The Dialectic model draws from an array of divorce theorists including the work of Kessler and Bohannan. The Dialectic model of divorce conceptualises the divorce process into a pre-divorce phase, a during-divorce phase and a post-divorce phase (Everett & Lee, 2014). Each phase contains a set of emotions and behaviours pertaining to the phase.

The pre-divorce phase is characterised by feelings of discontent and unhappiness with the partner and is accompanied by behaviours such as sulking, bickering, denial and attempting to rehabilitate the relationship (Geetha, 2017). Feelings such as shock and emptiness may also be present during this phase.

The 'during-divorce' phase is considered as the period where litigation has commenced and may be the time where the partners consult a lawyer and arrange the care and contact of the minors involved. It is also the phase where the physical separation takes place where one partner moves out of the house (Kaslow, 1980). Emotional responses during this phase include anger, sadness, loneliness and the start of the mourning process. Some partners can also experience a sense of relief (Everett & Lee, 2014).

Kaslow (1980) describes the post-divorce phase as a period of entering a new life and exploring new possibilities. It is regarded as a time of ambivalent feelings as a partner may begin to feel that there is hope for the future, whilst still having feelings of loss

about the failed relationship. Tasks may include completing the litigation process, seeking new social relationships, seeking new job opportunities and finalising the psychic divorce stage (Everett & Lee, 2014). The dialectic model has been incorporated in studies concerning divorce (Krumrei et al., 2011). Another such study was conducted in South Africa by Henig (2013). This study focused on divorced fathers' experiences of parental alienation and made use of the dialectic model to describe the divorce process.

Ahrons (1980) utilised a family system methodology in theorising a divorce recovery process which consists of five transitions. The first transition is that of individual cognition, where the divorcee withdraws emotionally from the relationship. The second transition includes family metacognition, which includes the family becoming conscious of the deterioration of the relationship. The third transition encompasses the physical separation of the divorcees, and the fourth transition describes the renegotiation of family roles and parental tasks. The last transition includes family redefinition, at which stage other possibilities such as blended families are presented (Ahrons, 1983). Within the family systems theory, each transition brings about new tasks and roles, which necessitates a change or adaptation for all family members (Walsh, 2011). Significant changes such as divorce may cause disequilibrium and tension within the family system. However, by discovering unique family processes and utilising resilience within the family, the adverse effects of divorce on families can be overturned. The family systems perspective on divorce has been used by a few studies (Barth, 1988; Togliatti et al., 2011).

Amato (2000) compared the divorce process with a traumatic crisis. A crisis refers to a state where an individual is confronted with a stressful incident which triggers emotional turmoil. An individual's ability to cope with the incident is determined by various inter- and intra-personal factors (Kanel, 2012). Maatta (2011) established that the crisis period in the marital dissolution may last approximately one year, in which time the divorcee needs to alter previous marital behaviours and emotions, towards a new variation of the old self. Although most divorcees are able to adapt after a year or two, some are unable to come to terms with their new lives and struggle with psychological wellbeing and may even suffer from depression (Amato, 2010).

The emotional wellbeing of divorcees is affected by several factors. Symoens et al. (2013), described aspects promoting the mental health of divorcees in their study. They predicted that high conflict levels, a lengthy divorce process, feelings of unfairness with regard to the division of assets and the non-initiator may all contribute to poor mental health. They found that high conflict levels and a prolonged divorce process does not necessary lead to diminished function. Furthermore, they suggest that the focus should fall on the quality of the process rather than the speed of the process. They also encourage moderate conflict, which allows divorcees to experience their anger in order to promote mental wellbeing. Prolonged conflict between former partners may be a prediction for lower levels of wellbeing. Stahl (2008) also suggests that continues conflict between divorcees might be detrimental to the divorcees' emotional wellbeing as well as that of the children. As predicted, unfair division of assets and non-initiator status both contributed to lower levels of mental health (Symoens et al., 2013). An aspect which promotes emotional wellbeing in divorcees, is the ability to forgive the self as well as the former partner. A study conducted by Brown and Rudestam (2011) proposes that forgiveness may lead to improved wellbeing. Results indicated that constant feelings of anger may lead to an inability for self-forgiveness as well as a lack of forgiveness of the former spouse. They suggested that interventions should be aimed at anger and forgiveness in order to improve mental health (Brown & Rudestam, 2011). These theories thus seem to highlight the importance of experiencing both anger (which is argued to assist with dealing with the divorce successfully) as well as obtaining a sense of forgiveness towards the former partner in order to deal effectively with the divorce process.

Various studies have concentrated on the adverse effects of divorce on children (Amato, 2000, Ahrons, 2007, Kalmijn, 2013, Kim & Tasker, 2013, Nusinovici et al., 2018, Douglas, 2020). It has been widely accepted that a divorce would unavoidably have a destructive impact on all children involved; however recent studies offer contradictory information, suggesting that in the long term, only one out of four children struggle to function optimally, whilst others were able to adapt (Walsh, 2011). The emotional environment prior to the divorce, the parental relationship, as well as the financial position of the family, may all impact children's adjustment (Amato, 2010 & Walsh, 2011). The damaging effects of parental relationship deterioration prior to the divorce may also explain children's emotional and behavioural difficulties after the

divorce. Therefore, Anthony et al., (2014) advocate that the event of the divorce itself cannot be seen as the sole predictor of children's problems after a divorce.

Literature suggests that young adults who have experienced parental divorce may only realise the impact of divorce when they engage in romantic relationships (Amato & De Boer, 2001 & Li, 2014). A study conducted by Collardeau and Ehrenberg (2016), hypothesised that exposure to parental divorce may have a negative impact on emerging adults' viewpoints on marriage and divorce. Findings, however, indicated that previous exposure to divorce cannot be the sole indicator of such a viewpoint and that other factors such as religion should also be taken into account. Divorce or the separation of parents has serious consequences for all involved. It also has an impact on the co-parenting relationship (Willen, 2015). It can thus be suggested that the divorce process in itself does not solely contribute to a child's successful adjustment to divorce, various other factors as described above should also be considered.

2.3 Co-parenting

The term co-parenting was developed during the 1980s as a result of the increase in union dissolutions (Feinberg, 2002). Co-parenting was traditionally defined as a family systems dynamic that encompasses both the mother's and father's coordination of their parenting efforts, and support for each other's parental role (Feinberg, 2002). However, traditional nuclear families are diminishing whilst mother-grandmother dyads and the number of non-residential fathers have increased (Hock & Mooradian, 2013). Thus the operationalisation of co-parenting was adapted to suit all types of families by focusing on the role of caregivers, instead of biological parents. However, the concept remains complex, as there seems to be little agreement on the components of co-parenting (Hock & Mooradian, 2013). Co-parenting refers to the quality of the parenting of children, conducted by two or more caregivers and consist of numerous dynamics (Lamela et al., 2016). In addition, not all co-parenting relationships are cooperative, and caregivers frequently find themselves in conflicting co-parenting roles (Feinberg, 2002).

2.3.1 Co-parenting theories

Although literature on co-parenting and divorce is found in abundance (Becher et al., 2019 & Molgora et al., 2014), there are scant studies informed by a conceptual model of co-parenting (Lamela et al., 2016). One of the first models attempting to conceptualise co-parenting was established by Feinberg (2003). The model was originally developed for co-parenting with intact families, but has also been applied within divorce literature (Lamela et al., 2016).

Feinberg (2003) proposed that co-parenting consist of four distinct components: support vs undermining, child rearing agreement vs disagreement, division of child-rearing tasks, as well as the coordination of family relationships. The first component - support vs undermining - refers to the degree to which parents support or undermine one another within the parental role. It also includes seeing the other parent as capable/incapable and having respect for the other parent's parenting in general (Mendez et al., 2015). For example, support occurs when co-parents respect each other's decision regarding the child's routine at the respective homes. The second component, child rearing agreement vs disagreement, entails the diverse viewpoints parents may have over numerous child-rearing tasks such as schooling, religious education, etc. For example, co-parents may disagree on whether a child should attend a private school or a government school. The division of child-rearing tasks and responsibilities refers to how daily tasks and chores are divided between parents. For instance, co-parents have to decide who collects the children from school and takes them to their extra-curricular activities. Lastly the coordination of family relationships is informed by parental conflict, coalitions between parents, triangulation (between parent and child) and lastly the amount of time each parent spends with a child (Mendez et al., 2015). A study conducted by Doss et al. (2014) utilised Feinberg's model in a program attempting to promote co-parenting during the transition to parenthood. The intervention included discussions about sharing child-rearing tasks as well as the management of disagreements between co-parents. Attendance of the co-parenting program had positive results for both parents, emphasising the value of Feinberg's model. Co-parenting styles have been identified by several studies (Choi et al., 2018; Schramm & Becher, 2020, Stahl, 2008; Sun & Jiang, 2021, these co-parenting styles relate to the components of Feinberg's conceptual model.

Several typologies of post-divorce co-parenting have been identified and discussed in the social sciences (Lamela, 2016). The cooperative co-parenting style occurs when one parent shows support towards the other parent, when there is equity concerning the division of labour, and minimal levels of undermining each other (Lamela et al., 2016). In addition, Amato et al. (2011) also identified a cooperative co-parenting style while attempting to describe a good divorce in their study. Their definition of cooperative co-parenting included co-parents who had sufficient contact with each other, were satisfied with the co-parent, did not meddle with the co-parent's child-rearing, mild conflict between co-parents and significant contact between the non-resident parent and children. This co-parenting style results in children being exposed to a minimum amount of conflict. Stahl (2008) asserted that children benefit greatly from a cooperative co-parenting style as parents are able to communicate effectively and act in the best interests of the child. Supporting the notion of cooperative co-parenting, Viry (2014) identified cohesive co-parenting. This occurs when co-parents reflect an optimistic image of the other parent in their absence and encourage contact with the other co-parent. Viry (2014) studied cohesive co-parenting in relation to the vicinity of the fathers to where the children and mothers resided, and predicted that high levels of cohesive co-parenting occur when a father resides close by. Results, however, suggested that vicinity does not ensure high levels of cohesive co-parenting.

A parallel co-parenting style is positioned between cooperative co-parents and high-conflict co-parents (Stahl, 2008). In their study, Amato et al. (2011) found that these parents do not really interfere in each other's parenting, but also do not receive much support from the other co-parent. Interaction between the minors and parent who does not reside with them is reasonable (Amato et al., 2011). Parallel co-parenting is recommended when parents are unable to have a cooperative co-parenting relationship due to high conflict (Stahl, 2008). It is suggested that whilst parallel parenting, parents should ignore each other and only communicate significant information regarding the child in order to minimise conflict and quarrelling (Stahl, 2008). Relating to parallel co-parenting, Amato et al. (2011) also identified a single co-parenting style. This co-parenting style mainly describes parents who do not reside with their children and are very uninvolved in their children's lives.

The high-conflict co-parenting style is characterised by little agreement between co-parents, unsupportiveness towards the other parent, unfairness regarding division of

child-rearing tasks, as well as the presence of high levels of conflict which children are exposed to (Lamela et al., 2016, Stahl, 2008). It has been postulated that high-conflict co-parenting is detrimental to children's adjustment to divorce (Stahl, 2008).

Another co-parenting style relating to the high conflict co-parenting style is the undermining co-parenting style (Lamela et al. 2016). These parents present with minimum agreement and support toward each other, displeasure with the way in which child-rearing tasks are divided, and undermines the other parent at every opportunity. Characteristically, this co-parenting style does not present with high levels of blatant conflict between co-parents, but rather high levels of concealed conflict (Lamela et al., 2016). Concealed conflict includes belittling and badmouthing the other parent in their absence, interrupting the co-parent's parental power, and attempting to sabotage the co-parent's attachment and relationship with the child (Feinberg & Kan, 2012; McHale, 1997). Concealed conflict strategies are aimed at promoting tension and conflict (Majdandz et al., 2012). Not surprisingly, the high conflict and undermining co-parenting styles are mostly associated with negative child outcomes and unsatisfactory parental wellbeing and parenting (Lamela et al., 2016).

Murphy et al. (2016) postulate that competitive co-parenting, another term for undermining co-parenting, is directly associated with negative child outcomes. They define competitive co-parenting as parents who consistently place a child in the middle of the co-parents' conflict with the aim of undermining the other parent. By doing this the child is placed in an unfair situation where they have to choose between parents (Murphy et al., 2016). Competitive co-parenting can manifest in numerous ways: parents competing with each other to be the favourite or most liked parent, the child receiving deliberate inconsistent messages from both parents, or when a parent teams up with a child against the other parent (Stahl, 2008). As expected, competitive co-parenting correlates highly with negative outcomes for children as they constantly receive conflicted messages and emotions from their parents, which indirectly affects their feelings of security (Stahl, 2008). Although above-mentioned co-parenting styles were identified in studies conducted several years apart (Amato et al., 2011; Feinberg, 2003; Lamela et al., 2016 & Stahl, 2008) it seems as if the results yielded corresponded with each other, indicating that co-parenting styles have remained generally unchanged throughout research studies.

Feinberg's model has been used in numerous studies with regards to co-parenting, demonstrating its influence in co-parenting literature. One such study investigating how parents co-parent their children with challenging behaviour - using Feinberg's model - found diverse outcomes. Results indicated that parents either tend to grow closer and become more supportive of each other or they seem to become unsupportive and start to parent in different ways (Mendez et al., 2015). Numerous studies have utilised Feinberg's model (Feinberg et al., 2016; Feinberg & Kan, 2008; Whitesell et al., 2015).

2.4 Factors affecting post-divorce co-parenting

The divorce process is mostly associated with negative feelings, stressors and choices that need to be made regarding division of assets, parenting of children etc. (Lamela et al. 2016). These aspects may dictate the quality of the co-parenting relationship. How these aspects and their related emotions are regulated unequivocally impacts the co-parenting relationship (Willen, 2015).

2.4.1 Inter-parental conflict

After union dissolution, parents find it difficult to form a good co-parenting relationship and it may be the most difficult task to accomplish (Visser et al., 2017). The co-parenting styles that are least favourable to high parenting quality include the high conflict co-parenting style and the undermining/competitive co-parenting style (Lamela et al., 2016; Murphy et al., 2016).

Children's exposure to co-parental conflict and whether the conflict is ongoing and violent influences the child's experience of the co-parental relationship and subsequently the child's emotional wellbeing. It is postulated that co-parental conflict has a detrimental impact on children (Visser et al., 2017). This dynamic of the co-parenting relationship is of great significance as the co-parent's ability to regulate their emotions in relation to the conflict with their ex-partner plays an important role in this study.

An aspect of conflict influencing the co-parental relationship, which has received scant attention, is the presence of intimate partner violence (Hardesty et al., 2016). Different types of intimate partner violence may have diverse outcomes on the co-parental relationship (Hardesty et al., 2012). It has been proposed that abusers who exert controlling behaviour during the marriage are unable to distinguish between the parenting and marital relationship and present with enmeshed boundaries post-divorce. Evidently, these type of co-parents are unable to co-parent successfully due to continuous controlling attempts from the abuser (Hardesty et al., 2012). These findings corroborated with a similar study carried out by Hardesty et al. (2016) suggesting that the prevalence of intimidation and controlling violence during the marriage are associated with low levels of co-parenting after union dissolution. Divorcees who have experienced abuse and controlling behaviour during their marriage might struggle to co-parent after the divorce. Subsequently, the divorcees might also struggle to regulate the intense emotions accompanying the co-parenting relationship with an abusive ex-partner.

Another aspect which is evident in the undermining/competitive co-parenting style and which may negatively influence parenting, is triangulation (Murphy et al., 2016). Triangulation takes place when an alliance is formed between a co-parent and a child. Subsequently, the child is placed in the mid of co-parenting conflict. The goal of triangulation is to undermine the co-parent and promote hostility, which results in a deterioration of the co-parenting relationship (Teubert & Pinquart, 2010). Co-parenting conflict might also be sustained or increased, if the support system (i.e. friends, mother, and father) of a parent harbours negative or hostile feelings toward the co-parent (Visser et al., 2017).

It is evident that exposure to a high level of conflict is detrimental to children (Stahl, 2008). It is thus important to gain a better understanding of how divorced co-parents regulate their emotions especially during conflict with their ex-partner, in order to improve the outcomes for children of divorce. Conversely, one study reviewing the available literature on conflict and co-parenting found that the type and quality of the relationship between children and parents is of greater importance to the children's wellbeing than the presence of conflict or type of co-parenting relationship (Lamela et al., 2016). Although it seems as if the relationship between children and parents is of great importance to children's wellbeing, the conflict between co-parents and

children's exposure to such conflict remains a risk for children's emotional wellbeing and should receive attention. Insight into how co-parents regulate their emotions might thus assist divorced co-parents with this aspect and can be beneficial to children's of divorce' emotional outcomes.

2.4.2 Parental Alienation

Frustrating contact between a child and the other co-parent amplifies conflict and hostility between co-parents (Bonach, 2005). Parental Alienation Syndrome (PAS) was a term initially used by psychologist Gardner (1998). PAS typically occurs amid a custody dispute within a high conflict divorce and entails the unjustified rejection of one parent by a child (Gardner, 1998). The rejection of the target parent (parent with whom the child refuse to have contact/relationship with) is fuelled by hostility and negativity of the other parent. The parent attempting to influence the child in order to reject the target parent may program the child to refuse contact with the target parent (Siracusano et al., 2015). Furthermore, the child concerned will denigrate the target parent continuously and will act accordingly (Vilalta & Nodal, 2017). This phenomenon prevents co-parenting at any level and has a destructive influence on the target parent's relationship with the child concerned. The regulation of emotions associated with PAS or contact interference between a child and a parent might be of significance in this study, as parents involved in the said situation might struggle to regulate their emotions successfully (Stahl, 2008).

2.4.3 Other factors

Factors which have been identified as promoting a high-quality co-parenting relationship include satisfaction with the maintenance agreement, the experience of a peaceful divorce procedure and forgiveness between former partners (Bonach, 2005). Adding to her previous work, Bonach (2007) proposed that the co-parenting relationship can be ameliorated by means of forgiveness. She suggested that in order to forgive the wrongs done during the marriage or divorce process, former partners have to 1) reassess and alter their viewpoint of the ex-partner and reasons why the divorce took place and develop a realistic viewpoint of the situation, 2) make a

conscious decision to let go of anger and negative feelings towards the former partner and 3) actively change their behaviour towards the ex-partner in order to function as cooperative co-parents (Bonach, 2007). The divorced co-parents' abilities to regulate emotions in order to obtain a sense of forgiveness and ability to reappraise the divorce is of significance to this study. Childhood trauma may also affect co-parent's ability to function as cooperative co-parents (Oehme et al., 2016). In this study findings advocate that co-parenting programs are more efficient when attending to parents' childhood trauma than when only focussed on providing information. Forgiveness and reappraisal of the divorce and co-parent seems to be of the most significant factors contributing to a more co-operative co-parenting style.

In conclusion, divorce is prevalent in South Africa (Statistics South Africa, 2019) and the phenomenon has the potential to have a long lasting negative impact on the children involved (Douglas, 2020) Various factors contribute to how the divorce and subsequent consequences impact children. One of these factors includes the quality of the co-parent relationship after the union dissolution (Lamela et al., 2016). As described in this chapter, literature suggests that several factors impact the co-parenting relationship and include but are not limited to, the divorcee's experience of support versus undermining, child rearing agreement versus disagreement, the division of child-rearing tasks and responsibilities, as well as the coordination of family relationships (Feinberg, 2003). Other factors include satisfaction with the maintenance agreements as well as the divorcees' ability to forgive and to move pass the divorce related emotional turmoil (Bonach, 2007). It can thus be concluded that the co-parenting relationship between divorcees plays a vital role in children's successful adaption to divorce. Insight into the divorcee's abilities to regulate the emotions experienced within the co-parenting relationship is of importance in this study as it is hypothesised that successful emotional regulation might contribute to positive outcomes for all parties involved in the divorce process.

3. Chapter 3: Emotional regulation

3.1 Introduction

Emotions are generated by a complex system including physical responses and cognitions, as well as behavioural aspects (Dvir et al., 2014). It can further be viewed as a response tendency. In the former mentioned perspective, emotions are seen as flexible responses that are produced when an individual evaluates a situation as potentially consisting of challenges or opportunities. These response tendencies are argued to be short lived and includes changes in behavioural, experiential, autonomic as well as the neuroendocrine systems (Gross, 1998). Of importance for this study is that this view of emotions includes that these response tendencies which consists of behavioural, experiential and physiological responses can be modulated. These modulations are then argued to impact the final emotion. Furthermore, emotions are postulated to facilitate decision making, prepare the individual for rapid motor responses and provide information regarding the ongoing match between organisms and the environment (Mordka, 2016). Lewis et al. (2008) argue that life will have no meaning without feelings and that emotions play a vital role in relationships. Historically, emotions were seen merely as a neural-activated state without importance or function (Pontier & Treur, 2007). However, the view and functionality of emotions have changed through the years and emotions are now viewed as significant and of paramount importance to our everyday life (Bosse et al., 2007). Parrot (2001) maintains that the functionality of emotions is largely dependent on the accuracy of the appraisals leading up to an emotion, how the emotions are controlled and the behaviour following an emotion, as well as the impact these behaviours might have on others.

3.2. History and definition of Emotional regulation

Research in the field of emotional regulation gained momentum during the 1990s and it is currently a well-known term within the field of psychology (Gross, 2015). Emotional regulation is generally defined as the process in which individuals attempt to control the intensity, duration and expressive behaviour concerning an emotion (Gross &

Thompson, 2007). The goal of the regulatory process should be not to replace a negative emotion with a positive one, but rather to influence the dynamics of an emotion in order to ensure an appropriate response within the contextual demands of a situation (Aldoa, 2013). Most emotions experienced by people are exposed to some degree of emotional regulation. People regulate both positive and negative emotions (Koole, 2009). Chapter two describes the divorce process and related procedures and emotions accompanying the divorce process: from this it can be deduced that divorcees commonly experience negative emotions during and after the process, which is postulated to be regulated to some extent. Of interest in this study is how these negative emotions are regulated by the divorcees and the impact this has on the co-parent relationship.

Emotional regulation is further distinguished from both mood regulation and coping. Emotional regulation is viewed as a subordinate form of affect regulation (Gross, 1998). Emotional regulation refers to the regulation of an emotion; a short-lived feeling characterised by a behavioural component, whereas moods are described as an experiential state which lasts longer than just an emotion (Berking & Whitley, 2014). Mood regulation refers to the alteration of an emotional experience, not an immediate response (Gross, 2014). Compas et al. (2014) compared the constructs of coping and emotion regulation. They postulate that although there are noted similarities, they remain distinctive from each other in that coping is limited to stress-enduring situations whilst emotion regulation is active in stressful as well as non-stressful situations - and may be seen as a more comprehensive term than coping.

The current study will make use of the Process model of emotional regulation as put forth by Gross (1998) in order to gain a better understanding of emotional regulation and emotion regulation strategies.

3.3 Process model of emotional regulation

Gross's process model of emotional regulation has been argued to be the leading model in explaining emotional regulation and the different regulatory strategies, as it encompasses strategies employed throughout the generative course of emotions (Palmer & Alfano, 2017). This model was originally presented in 1998 and has been extended to the extended process model (Gross, 2015). The model is grounded on

the modal model of emotions which conceptualises emotions as a four-step process (Gross, 2015). Firstly, an emotion-provoking experience (which may be external or internal) occurs, followed by attending to and evaluating the experience. The last step includes the individual's response which may be physical, behavioural or experiential in nature (Naragon-Gainey et al., 2017).

Gross (2015) defines emotional regulation as an attempt to alter a current emotional experience into a desired emotional outcome. This process includes efforts to change the intensity, duration and behaviour connected with the emotion. He further posits that, although emotions assist us (mostly) in acting behaviourally correctly, emotions may also have an undesired effect and fail to assist us in functional behaviour (Gross, 2002, Gross, 2013). When the latter occurs, emotional regulation is required. The process model differentiates between antecedent-focused emotional regulation and response-focused emotional regulation. The antecedent emotional regulation takes place prior to the generation of the emotion whilst the response-focused emotional regulation takes place after the emotion is produced (Gross, 2015). This approach implies that different emotional regulation strategies should have different outcomes. Antecedent regulatory strategies are more successful than response-focused strategies as they are employed in the course of the emotion developing process whereas the response-focused strategies are employed only once the emotion has already matured (Aldoa, 2013). Gross (1998) identified five strategies of emotional regulation: situation selection, situation modification, attentional deployment, cognitive change and response modulation. These will be discussed later in this chapter.

Tamir (2016) argues that people regulate emotions to achieve an emotional goal which may include reaching a preferred emotion or prevent one from experiencing an undesired emotion. Achieving these emotional goals does not necessarily entail the substituting of a maladaptive emotion with an adaptive emotion. It does, however, include modifying aspects of an emotion to ensure a functional response within the context in which the emotion takes place (Aldoa, 2013).

Massah et al. (2016) conducted a study on the efficiency of emotional regulation strategy training based on Gross's model. The study focused on decreasing anger in a population of drug-dependants. Positive results were yielded from the study, demonstrating that Gross's model can be utilised as an intervention for emotion

regulation training. As Gross's model is widely known and accepted as the leading theory within the literature, this study will utilise this theory in order to study the emotion regulation experience of divorcees who co-parent.

3.4 Emotional regulation strategies

Gross (2014) differentiates between the following emotional regulating strategies; situation selection and situation modification, attentional deployment and cognitive change and lastly response modulation. These strategies are discussed in the following section.

3.4.1 Situation selection and situation modification

Situation selection entails either avoiding or approaching a situation in order to reach a desired emotion or to prevent the development of an unwanted emotion. These situations may consist of individuals, places and/or objects (Palmer & Alfano, 2017). For example, a divorced mother frustrates a father's contact with his children because she does not want to see her former partner face-to-face. Gross (2015) suggests that individuals need an intrinsic understanding of themselves in order to successfully conduct situation selection, as the long term costs of their decisions should be taken into account. Situation modification is employed after the emotion-provoking encounter has occurred, when efforts are made to change aspects of the situation (Naragon- Gainey et al., 2017). An example of situation modification may include a divorced father asking his former partner to avoid talking to him about maintenance when collecting the children for visits as it would initiate conflict between them. Situation modification includes alterations to the physical surroundings, and not the internal environment (cognitions) which is attended to later in the process (Gross, 2008). Situation selection and situation modification are regulatory strategies which are utilised at the earliest point in which emotions can be regulated, as the emotion is only beginning to unfold and has not yet reached its full magnitude (Sheppes et al., 2015).

3.4.2 Attentional deployment and cognitive change

Attentional deployment and cognitive change are used once an emotion-eliciting situation is already occurring. The goal of these strategies are preventative in nature, as they attempt to avert the full development of an emotion (Kay, 2016). Attentional deployment is used to alter early information processing by either focusing attention on certain aspects, or purposefully redirecting attention to non-emotional aspects (Sheppes et al., 2015). Attentional deployment is a strategy which is utilised throughout a person's lifespan, especially when one has no control over the external situation (Gross, 2008).

A well-known example of attentional deployment is distraction, referring to an individual who decisively directs attention away from the negative features of a situation (Palmer & Alfano, 2017). In a co-parenting relationship with a former partner, for example, one only focuses on the children's best interests and not on one's own feelings of anger. It can also imply an intrinsic modification of attention such as thinking about a positive experience or emotion, as opposed to a current negative situation (Gross, 2008). Rumination is defined as the continuous focus on mostly negative aspects of an emotion-eliciting event and is also known as a form of attentional deployment (Gross, 2008).

Cognitive strategies have been regarded as an imperative aspect of emotional regulation strategies (Scheibe et al., 2015). Cognitive change includes the attempts made in order to change the manner in which a situation is cognitively presented (Naragon-Gainey et al., 2017). It refers to the consequences an individual's pre-existing beliefs regarding a situation may have on similar situations in the future (Schmidt et al., 2019). It is theorised that these pre-existing beliefs or perspectives have an impact on the regulatory process (Igna & Stefan, 2015). Perhaps the most prominent cognitive strategy studied is reappraisal: modifying the emotion by changing the connotation one has to a situation (Kay, 2016). Reappraisal is also defined by Igna and Stefan (2015) as altering the initial evaluation of an emotional producing situation with the intent to change the emotional impact. An example may be trying to focus more on your ex-wife's positive attributes as a mother, rather than focusing on her negative attributes as a partner. Other cognitive strategies include attentional distraction (where an individual deliberately turns attention towards something else)

along with mindfulness (restricting and refining thoughts and emotions in order to improve wellbeing).

3.4.3 Response modulation

According to the process model, the last attempt to regulate one's emotion takes place after the emotion has fully developed; and is called response modulation (Kay, 2016). This entails the change of either a behavioural or physical reaction to the experienced emotion, which requires more resources from the individual and implies less chance of regulation (Palmer & Alfano, 2017); for example, when in a conflict situation with your former partner, counting to ten before responding in anger. Response modulation encompass both adaptive as well as maladaptive strategies. Utilising substances to decrease anxiety may be seen as a maladaptive strategy, for example. Expressive suppression is a form of response modulation where the outward expression of emotional behaviour is suppressed in an attempt to control emotions, by not showing them (Ford & Mauss, 2015). Adaptive response modulation may inter alia include strategies such as relaxation and exercise (Gross, 2008).

3.5 The dynamics of emotional regulation

3.5.1 Automatic vs controlled emotional regulation

Emotional regulation may be an automatic process (also known as non-conscious emotional regulation) or controlled emotional regulation also known as conscious emotional regulation. Mauss et al. (2007) describe controlled emotional regulation as a voluntary goal-directed process utilising attentional sources, whereas automatic emotional regulation is an involuntary, goal-directed modification to an emotion. Automatic emotional regulation makes use of knowledge structures (such as cognitive schemas) triggered by information received from the senses, which results in the activation of psychological functions. Mauss et al. (2007) suggest that automatic emotional regulation is grounded in repetitive habits, childhood emotional regulation strategies and cultural values.

Although it has been widely accepted that controlled emotional regulation is more effective than automatic emotional regulation (Williams et al., 2009), literature presents incongruent findings. Williams et al. (2009) hypothesised that automatic emotional regulation is just as effective as controlled emotional regulation - if not more effective. They argued that since non-conscious processes are not limited by the restrictions of data processing resources, non-conscious or automatic emotional regulation should be more effective than conscious or controlled emotional regulation. Results regarding the former were, however, inconclusive. Nonetheless, their results did indicate that non-conscious emotional regulation diminishes the magnitude of the emotional response in emotion-eliciting events.

3.5.2 Intrinsic vs extrinsic emotional regulation

Intrinsic emotional regulation involves the regulation of one's own emotions whilst extrinsic emotional regulation includes regulating someone else's emotions (Gross & Thompson, 2007). Developmental researchers concentrate mostly on extrinsic emotional regulation which, during early childhood, is presented as a dyadic system between the child and caregiver, where the caregiver is primarily responsible for the child's regulation of emotions (Roque et al., 2013). In contrast, adult literature focuses more on intrinsic emotion regulation (Gross & Thompson, 2007).

Zaki and Williams (2013) propose an interpersonal model of emotional regulation, suggesting that emotional regulation can occur in both inter- and intra-personal regulation. They define interpersonal regulation as an interaction that takes place within a social context whilst having a regulatory goal to reach. They further differentiate between intrinsic and extrinsic interpersonal regulation, where intrinsic interpersonal regulation involves seeking social contact with the goal of regulating personal experiences such as talking to a friend about losses experienced in the divorce process. In contrast, extrinsic interpersonal regulation includes the regulation of someone else's emotions; such as remaining calm and trying to avoid conflict in a situation where your former partner is angry with the care and contact arrangements, in order to prevent them from becoming infuriated (Zaki & Williams, 2013). Grecucci et al. (2015) extends Zaki and Williams' research by noting the importance of distinguishing between two methods of regulating social emotions. The first method

includes the regulating of emotions inside ourselves elicited from social situations or interactions with other people; such as being angry when accused of frustrating your ex-husband's contact with the children. The second method includes techniques utilised by the individual to assist others in regulating their emotions within their relationships, such as providing therapy to a divorcee (Grecucci et al., 2015).

3.5.3 Up-regulation vs down-regulation

Both positive and negative emotions can be up regulated or down regulated (Gross et al., 2011). Up-regulation is usually focused on positive emotions such as happiness and refers to an attempt at increasing or upholding an emotion. The goal of up-regulating positive emotions is to increase positive emotions. Individuals up-regulate positive feelings purely for the beneficial effect it has on mental wellbeing (Livingstone & Srivastava, 2012). A study conducted by Livingstone and Srivastava (2012) identified three basic up-regulation strategies used in everyday life, namely: engagement, betterment as well as indulgence. Results indicated that both engagement (such as engaging in social interaction) and betterment (such as participating in religious activities) are associated with positive outcomes, whereas indulgence (such as drinking alcohol) is associated with mostly negative long term outcomes.

The down-regulation of emotions is an action directed at minimising (mostly) negative emotions, particularly anxiety, anger and sadness (Gross et al., 2006). Numerous studies focus on the down-regulation of negative emotions (Finlay-Jones et al., (2015) & Wilson et al., (2014). Naragon-Gainey et al. (2017) identified ten well researched strategies known to be used in the down-regulation of negative emotions. The strategies are: rumination; distraction; acceptance; problem solving; behavioural avoidance; emotion suppression; expressive suppression; reappraisal; mindfulness and lastly, worry. Results indicated that distress tolerance was the closest underlying factor positively associated with lower levels of negative thoughts and increased levels of acceptance and mindfulness (Naragon-Gainey et al., 2017).

3.6 Emotional dysregulation and maladaptive regulatory strategies

Emotional dysregulation occurs when an individual has attempted to regulate an emotion but is unsuccessful in reaching the desired outcome. It presents in two forms: emotional regulation failure (omitting of emotion regulation when required) and emotional dysregulation (choosing an inappropriate regulatory strategy) (Gross, 2013). It is postulated that divorced co-parents commonly make use of emotion dysregulation or maladaptive emotion-regulating strategies when experiencing conflict with their ex-partner (Willen, 2015). Maladaptive regulatory strategies generally include avoidance, suppression and rumination (Aldoa, 2013). The lack of efficient emotion-regulating strategies has serious negative consequences on an individual's emotional wellbeing and has been linked with the presence of psychopathology.

3.7 Impact of context on emotional regulation

In order to understand emotional regulation, the social context in which it occurs should be given due consideration (Aldoa, 2013). The functionality of an emotion depends on the context in which the emotion is expressed (Gross, 2015). For the purpose of this study the context in which emotion regulation takes place is in divorced co-parents. An example might include displaying dissatisfaction with a former partner by venting about it in the presence of children, which would be seen as an inappropriate way of managing emotions; whereas venting about it whilst in a therapy session would be regarded as appropriate. Of importance is that the context in which emotion regulation occurs is the deciding factor in regulating an emotion, or to what extent an emotion will be regulated (Aldoa, 2013).

Very few studies are directed at co-parents' abilities to regulate emotions concerning child-rearing following a divorce (Willen, 2015; Novo et al., 2019). Raising children in collaboration with a previous partner may prove to be difficult, especially if negative emotions characterise the relationship. Barros et al. (2015) argue that parents' emotional regulation strategies influence their parenting skills. The authors further suggest that, in order to understand parental skills, it is required to attend to a parent's emotional regulation strategies. Emotional dysregulation in parenting may have a destructive impact on child-rearing processes and may result in inappropriate discipline and failure to recognise the child's problems as well as the inability to solve

problems arising from child-rearing tasks (Barros et al., 2015). Willen (2015) studied the emotional regulation strategies of divorced parents within the co-parenting context by making use of Gross's (1998) conceptual model. She found that some parents are flexible within their regulatory skills and are able to use context-appropriate regulatory strategies with positive results. In contrast, results indicated that the use of rigid emotional regulatory skills contributes to greater conflict. Willen (2015) further argues that emotional regulation is much more complex when co-parents disagree on parenting their children. In addition, the presence of continuous hostile feelings also complicates emotional regulation abilities (Willen, 2015).

3.8 Conclusion

Emotional regulation is a complicated term for something we constantly and spontaneously do in our everyday lives. In its simplest form it refers to the way we manage the emotions we experience daily. Emotional regulation occurs mostly when unwanted feelings are experienced (although positive feelings may also be regulated). The individual sets an emotional regulation goal and efforts are made to change the emotion. There are several ways in which emotions can be managed. A prominent model describing emotional regulation strategies is the process model of emotional regulation (Gross, 1998). Although emotional regulation mostly occurs unconsciously, research suggests that all emotions are subjected to a form of emotional regulation. The way in which emotions are managed or regulated has a significant impact on emotional wellbeing. When emotional regulation is ineffective it may have serious consequences on emotional wellbeing. Emotional regulation cannot be understood without taking the context within which emotions are regulated, into account. The context may be the deciding factor in whether emotional regulation is functional or dysfunctional. In this study, the context includes divorcees who are involved in a co-parenting relationship. As divorce is known to be characterised by negative emotions, it is postulated that emotion regulation might play an important role in maintaining a successful co-parenting relationship.

4. Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

In this study the researcher aimed to gain insight into the experiences of emotional regulation amongst divorcees who are in a co-parenting relationship. The researcher made use of a qualitative research design which is aimed at gaining in depth, authentic insights into the experiences of the participants. In this chapter the researcher will aim to describe the research question posed in this study, following a discussion of the methodology used to retrieve the information - which includes the sampling procedure, as well as the method used to analyse the data. Furthermore, the researcher will attend to the ethical issues and considerations relevant to this study.

4.2 Research question

The aim of this study was to explore and describe the experiences of emotional regulation amongst divorcees who co-parent. The following research question was posed: What are divorcees' experiences of emotional regulation within a co-parenting relationship?

4.3 Research design

Studies attempting to describe co-parenting in combination with emotional regulation is scarce (according to a search on Ebscohost, February 2021), therefore the capturing of rich data was indicated for this study. A qualitative research methodology was used. Qualitative research design aims to describe experiences as they occur in everyday life (Stangor, 2011). Furthermore, a qualitative study emphasise the understanding of these everyday life experiences from a subjective perspective gleaned from participants (de Vos et al., 2015).

The use of case study research was initially employed by researchers who found quantitative research limiting with regards to explaining and describing social problems (Zainal, 2007). Case study research can be defined as an empirical enquiry that examines a current real-life phenomenon within a specific context (Starman, 2013).

Furthermore, case study research aims to retrieve as much information regarding the case as possible (Cronin, 2014).

When considering the context and nature of the aim of this study (to gain insight into the experiences of divorcees within a co-parenting relationship) the qualitative research design is the appropriate design to utilise as a quantitative research design will not enable the researcher to obtain the in-depth and authentic experiences of the participants. Furthermore, the use of a case study research design enabled the researcher to obtain each participant's unique experience of their emotional regulation within their co-parenting relationship. The qualitative research design thus enables the researcher to obtain appropriate and relevant information to assist the researcher in studying the phenomenon of emotional regulation and co-parenting at an in-depth level, rather than obtaining superficial statistical information regarding the phenomena.

In order to ensure that the real-life phenomenon is understood from different lenses, a multiple, single case study design was consequently employed.

According to Crowe et al. (2011) and Yin (2012), case studies are an established qualitative-research design particularly suited to fields within the social sciences such as psychology: the reason predominantly being the capacity of case studies to facilitate an in-depth understanding of intricate issues as they occur in the real-life context. A multiple, single case study design furthermore allows the researcher to simultaneously analyse several cases in order to understand the differences and similarities between contextually-comparable cases (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Each participant constituted a case, providing a different perspective on their experiences of emotional regulation within the co-parenting relationship. Participants' experiences were compared and differences and similarities noted. Conclusions were drawn from the retrieved data and each participant's viewpoint and experiences were utilised to validate the conclusions (Vohra, 2014).

4.4 Participants and sampling procedures

The aim of this study was to gain more knowledge regarding divorcees' experiences of emotional regulation within a co-parenting relationship; therefore, purposive sampling was utilised.

Purposive sampling - as put forward in Nishishiba et al. (2014) - was used to recruit participants. This type of sampling enables the researcher to select participants in order to ensure that relevant information concerning the specific topic will be retrieved. Conversely, purposive sampling may be influenced by the researcher's own prejudice, jeopardising the generalizability of the data (Gaganpreet, 2017).

The population consisted of divorcees with one or more children under the age of 18, who are in a co-parenting relationship. The study focused on individuals' experiences, and not on the couple as a unit.

The researcher invited participants by advertising the study by means of a pamphlet at organisations and therapists working with clients who might have been suitable to, and interested in, the study. The advertisement provided the researcher's contact details so that prospective participants could contact her directly. Inclusion criteria included divorcees being in a co-parenting relationship whilst having a child or children under the age of 18. Exclusion criteria prohibited individuals who were divorced for fewer than two years from participating in the study in order to prevent the risk of re-traumatisation and allow for a reasonable adjustment period. The sample consisted of 6 participants. They were able to articulate themselves in both English and Afrikaans. Baker and Edwards (2012) advise six to ten interviews as the minimum number acceptable in qualitative research. The current study's sample size of six participants was deemed satisfactory as data saturation was achieved and no new themes emerged from the data (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Table 1*Basic participant information*

Participant	Gender	Number of children	Language of participant	Number of years divorced	Age	Socio-economic status
Participant 1	Female	1	Afrikaans	12	42	Middle class
Participant 2	Female	2	English & Afrikaans	8	45	Middle class
Participant 3	Female	3	Afrikaans	6	46	Middle class
Participant 4	Female	1	Afrikaans	10	39	Middle class
Participant 5	Male	2	Afrikaans	8	44	Middle class
Participant 6	Male	1	Afrikaans	4	38	High socio-economic status

The sample consisted of 6 participants, all of whom were from different co-parenting relationships. Participants were able to articulate themselves in both English and Afrikaans.). The interviews were conducted by the researcher in English and Afrikaans depending on the fluency and preference of the participant. Participant two made use of both English and Afrikaans and tends to speak both languages.

4.5 Data Collection

The interviews were conducted by the researcher in English and Afrikaans, depending on the fluency and preference of the participant. The interviews were semi-structured in nature and lasted between 45 and 90 minutes. Interviews took place at the

researcher's office, as this was the participants preferred location. An interview schedule was compiled by the researcher to indirectly explore the nature of the co-parenting relationship, as well as the emotional regulation strategies employed by divorcees within the co-parenting relationship. The questions posed to participants (as stipulated in Appendix C) were open-ended in order to uphold the goal of qualitative research - i.e. allowing participants the freedom to answer questions as extensively as they deem appropriate and, in doing so, uncovering as much as possible about the participants and their circumstances as possible (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). The interviews were electronically recorded and transcribed verbatim by the researcher prior to analysis. The interviews were not translated as the participants mainly spoke Afrikaans.

Whilst preparing for the interview the researcher attended to the following: establishing rapport with the respondent by introducing herself and explaining the goal of the research, gathering contextual background about the respondent, asking non-leading relevant questions and ending the interview in an appropriate way (Blandford, 2013). When ending the interview, the researcher thanked the respondents for participating and enquired whether they needed therapeutic assistance (Robson, 2011). When using interviews as a data collection tool, taking notes whilst busy with the interview is not sufficient in recording the data as some data will be lost; it is therefore necessary to record the data, with the permission of the respondents (Alswaari, 2014).

4.6 Data Analysis

The transcribed interview conducted with each participant was analysed using thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998, Braun & Clarke, 2013). Social science researchers most frequently make use of the thematic analysis method when analysing data (Alswaari, 2014). Thematic analysis organizes and codes data into detailed themes and subthemes. A theme represents significant information related to the research question and provides patterns of meaning within the data (Robson, 2011). Furthermore, an inductive process in relation to thematic analysis was used. Such a process ensures that the coding of data takes place without imposing any pre-existing analytic assumptions on the part of the researcher (Alswaari, 2014). The most salient themes were discussed in the dissertation. The process of thematic analysis consists

of six phases: these steps should be regarded as guidelines only and the researcher may move back and forth between steps (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Phase 1: The first phase of thematic analysis entails transcribing the recorded interviews followed by reading the transcripts (Robson, 2011). The transcription process enables the researcher to familiarise themselves with the data and to become aware of possible patterns and themes (Seidman, 2012). Active reading is employed, which requires the researcher to make notes with regard to possible themes, while reading through the data (Braun & Clark, 2006). During the first phase of data analysis the researcher thus wrote down codes as they emerged whilst listening and transcribing the interviews. After writing down the codes, the data was read through numerous times by the researcher, for purposes of familiarisation.

Phase 2: The second phase of thematic analysis involved generating initial codes for the transcribed data. Coding of the transcribed data represents the first step in the process of identifying themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Codes are different from identifying themes in that themes may be broader than codes. Codes are aspects of the data which the researcher finds meaningful and interesting (Robson, 2011). By coding data, the researcher attempted to organise the retrieved raw data into manageable data. Coding was done manually by making notes on the paper on which the data was written, the researcher generated 48 codes from the raw data. These codes were organised into tables.

Phase 3: Once the raw data was coded the researcher was able to use the codes in order to identify themes. The third phase of thematic analysis thus involved sorting the codes into themes (Robson, 2011). The researcher simplified the process by using visual representation to identify themes (Alhojailan, 2012). At the end of this step, the researcher identified themes as well as sub-themes. Codes that remained unused or did not seem to fit into the identified themes were placed into a separate theme, which was used at a later stage (Braun & Clark, 2006). Three main themes were identified in this process

Phase 4: The researcher reviewed the identified themes, ensuring that the coded data supported the themes (phase four of thematic analysis). Reviewing of themes is similar to refining themes, this process ensures they do not overlap and it enables the researcher to find out how they are related (Boyatzis, 1998).

Phase 5: Phase five of thematic analysis encompassed naming and defining the themes. This required that the researcher identify the fascinating and attention-grabbing aspect of the theme. In defining and naming the theme, the researchers should not simply paraphrase the theme (Robson, 2011). The themes were named avoidance, conceptual adjustments as well as external behaviours.

Phase 6: The final phase of thematic analysis was to document the data into a logic story, reflecting and combining the raw data as well as the published writings utilised in the literature review (Boyatzis, 1998). This was accomplished through the writing of the dissertation. The literature on emotional regulation, especially, was used to make sense of the data.

4.7 Rigour and trustworthiness

Qualitative research approaches are diverse and need to establish trustworthiness and rigour (Anney, 2014). A study is trustworthy if the reader of the research report judges it to be so (Gunawan, 2015). Trustworthiness is obtained through credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability.

Credibility relates to how believable the results of the study are. Credibility will be achieved in the current study by detailed documentation of the entire research process (known as an audit trail), as well as checking with the participants that the interpretation of their data is, in fact, their experience thereof (Hadi & Closs, 2015).

Dependability relates to how consistent the data is and will be achieved in the current study by the researcher's reflective journaling (Hadi & Closs, 2015). Transferability relates to the extent to which the data can be generalised. According to Morrow (2005), this is achieved when the researcher provides sufficient information about the self; referring to the researcher as the instrument and the research context, processes, participants, and researcher-participant relationships in order to enable the reader to decide how the findings may transfer.

Lastly, confirmability addresses the core issue that research findings should represent, as far as possible, the situation being researched, rather than the beliefs, pet theories or biases of the researcher (Morrow, 2005). In this study, the findings should represent the experiences and perspectives of the participants instead of the researcher's own

preconceived ideas or beliefs. The reader should note that what participants viewed as the child's best interest is subjective to their view of what was best for the child, their perspective and view of the ex-partner, and experience of divorce.

4.8 Ethical considerations

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from both the Committee for Title Registrations and the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of the Humanities, University of the Free State (ethical clearance number: UFS-HSD2017/0696). Due consideration was given to the ethical guidelines provided by the APA and the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) (Health Professions Act 1974). The HPCSA stipulates that researchers should conduct research that is in the best interest of the participants by minimizing possible harm and to ensure that their autonomy as well as their confidentiality is respected. Ethical principles considered in this study included obtaining participants' informed consent. This included discussing the aim, process, possible risks and benefits with participants prior to the start of their interviews. They were also informed about their right to withdraw at any time during the process.

Another ethical consideration was taking note of the impact the research might have on the participants' emotional wellbeing. The researcher was therefore attentive to any signs of possible trauma at the conclusion of the interviews including anxiousness, distress, hyper-vigilance, or any worrying physical symptoms. Participants who displayed such signs were referred to FAMSA for therapeutic assistance. FAMSA is a Non-Profit-Organisation (NPO) which delivers therapeutic services to families and individuals. The researcher provided the contact details to participants who needed therapeutic assistance.

Another aspect which the HPCSA deems essential is the protection of participant's confidentiality (Health Professions Act 1974). This was ensured by using pseudonyms throughout the study and ensuring that no identifying information will be shared with the public. The researcher honoured the trust that the participants placed in her and treated them with dignity, sensitivity and empathy during the entire process.

Other ethical considerations included; appropriate data collection and storage; ensuring that there were no conflicts of interest between the researcher and participants as well as excluding any form of discrimination against participants by not selecting them on ground of race, culture, social status and religious beliefs (Health Professions Act 1974).

4.9 Conclusion

In conclusion, the researcher attempted to answer the research question posed, by making use of a qualitative research design. By focusing on the unique and authentic experiences of the participants, the researcher ensured that data relevant to the research question would be retrieved by employing the purposive sampling method. Once the data was retrieved thematic analysis was employed in order to make sense of the raw data and to identify research themes and patterns. Attention was given to the trustworthiness of the study as well as ethical considerations. In the following chapter the results will be discussed.

5. Chapter 5: Findings

5.1 Introduction

The study provided valuable findings that answered the research questions and achieved the research aim outlined in Chapter Four. The current chapter gives a description of the findings and supporting evidence from the transcribed interviews. Quotes from the transcribed interviews are used to substantiate the inference drawn from the participants' responses. The themes are highlighted in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Identified themes

Themes	Participants						Number of participants who utilised the emotional regulation strategy
	1	2	3	4	5	6	Combined scores
Avoidance		X		X	X	X	4
Conceptual adjustments	X	X	X	X	X	X	6
External behaviours	X	X	X	X	X	X	6

The identified themes explore and describe co-parents' experiences of emotional regulation within a co-parenting relationship, specifically regarding the challenges that they faced, and their indirect and direct practices of emotional regulation. Nuances in these experiences are explored, such as their use of a variety of emotion regulation

strategies including the utilisation of avoidance and cognitive adjustments. The themes that emerged from the data analysis are discussed and explored in greater depth accompanied by relevant quotes from the interview transcripts.

5.2 Theme one: Avoidance

Avoidance was identified as a prominent emotional regulatory strategy used by the participants. All but one participant from the data set did not make use of avoidance as an emotion-regulating strategy. Information from the interviews suggested that different types of avoidance seemed to be used by participants; as a result, two subthemes emerged from avoidance. They included physical avoidance and avoidances in communication between co-parents.

Physical avoidance

The participants' experiences of physical avoidance within the context of emotional regulation and co-parenting were explored. Their accounts suggested that the divorcees made deliberate decisions to avoid an emotion from developing. One manner in which they made a deliberate decision to avoid emotions and possible conflict from developing was to physically avoid their ex-partner. Participant six explained verbatim how he physically avoided his ex-partner as in his experience she became aggressive during contact situations "*Ons vermy mekaar, dis bad, ons het so min as moontlik kontak ... want ek probeer konflik vermy, heeltemal omdat sy 'n aggressiewe houding aanneem.*" (We avoid each other, it's bad, we have as little as possible contact, because I try to avoid contact completely as she takes in an aggressive stance.") It can thus be argued that in his experience having limited physical contact and therewith physically avoiding his ex-partner assists him in regulating his emotions. Physical avoidance also seemed to prevent participants from engaging in conflict with their ex-partner as alluded to by participant two ... he still does not come into my property, when he picks her up he waits at the gate. He comes to the gate I let her go out and she goes to him. I never go out to meet him because when he I did do that he starts to shout at me and he accuses me" (sic). From the aforementioned it also seems that for this participant, merely being in the presence of her ex-partner can pose a possible risk of conflict between the co-parents. Therefore,

by avoiding a potential conflict situation the participant in effect attempts to avoid negative emotions from developing which is argued to assist with emotional regulation. For participant five, the physical avoidance of his ex-partner seemed to result long term in a type of “truce”. He indicated that “... *dit is nou nog nie ‘n goeie situasie nie, ja baie slegte goed. Ons het soort van ‘n “truce”, ‘n tipe van ‘n skietstilstand. Ek probeer situasies vermy wat ek weet konflik gaan veroorsaak. (...it’s still not a good situation, yes very bad. We have a type of truce, a type of ceasefire; I try to avoid situations which I know are going to cause conflict*”. This participant also mentioned that he avoids being alone with his ex-wife and always tries to have his current wife with him when he needs to be in the presence of his ex-partner. Participant 4 indicated verbatim that “... *ons vermy mekaar maar, daar was maar nog gedurig konflik. (...we avoid each other, there has been constant conflict)*”. She also added that “...*ek mag nie naby sy huis of goed kom nie. Toe doen ek maar dieselfde as hy kom dan maak ek maar net die hek oop, sy kom deur dan maak ek maar weer die hek toe, ek gaan nie uit nie, stupid. (...I am not allowed to come near his house or his things. So I did the same, when he comes, I just open the gate, she comes through and then I close the gate. I don’t go out, stupid.)*” It should be noted that it appears as if this participant had insight into the emotional impact which her emotion-regulating strategy seemed to have as she indicated that she is aware that her emotion-regulating strategy is “stupid”.

In light of the above-mentioned, it seems plausible that most of the participants purposefully chose to physically avoid situations where they would be expected to be in the presence of the co-parent, thereby deliberately selecting or avoiding certain situations. It seems as if they avoid the situation because it lessens the opportunity of engaging in conflict with the co-parent, which in turn helps them to regulate their emotions. Information from the interviews further suggests that aspects which seem to instigate the conflict included emotions pertaining to the divorce, maintenance issues as well as contact issues.

Avoidances in communication between co-parents

Information obtained from the participants’ narratives revealed that some divorced co-parents made changes in their communication with their ex-partner in an attempt to

regulate their emotions. Two subthemes were identified within this theme which include selective communication and minimising communication.

Selective communication refers to being selective with regards to which information they share with the co-parent in an attempt to regulate their emotions, as demonstrated by participant three “... *daar is goed wat ek van hom weerhou, maar ek weerhou dit omdat ek nie wil hê hy moet ‘n negatiewe of slegte verhouding met haar (dogter) hê nie* (sic)”. (“There are things that I keep from him, but I keep it from him because I don’t want him to have a negative or bad relationship with his (daughter)”). Similarly, participant four mentioned that *ek het geen respek vir hom gehad nie ek het hom ook nie vertrou nie so dit het obviously die co-parenting heeltemal beïnvloed. Ek het baie keer nie eers dit belangrik geag om hom in te lig nie, ek voel ek is die een wat die besluite neem en daar is geen manier vir hom om betrokke te gaan wees nie* (sic).” “I did not have any respect for him and I did not trust him so it obviously impacted the co-parenting relationship. I often did not even feel that it was important to inform him, I felt that I am the one who makes all the decisions and there is no way that he is going to be involved”.

This participant regulated her emotions by purposefully not informing the co-parent about decisions she made, as it appears she did not want him to be part of the decision-making process. This seems to have assisted her in regulating her emotions. It can, however, be argued that it might have had a negative impact on the co-parenting relationship in general, as by not sharing all the communication the other co-parent might experience a sense of exclusion.

Participants’ accounts also revealed that some participants minimised all type of communication with the co-parent, in order to regulate emotions as indicated by participant six “*As sy my bel, ja hoekom bel jy my, wat wil jy hê en wat gaan aan? Maar anders het ons nie kontak nie, glad nie. Dit is letterlik van, ek sal vir haar ‘n WhatsApp stuur, by McDonald’s 5uur, bye, of ek sal partykeer se Hi, Hi McDonalds half 6. Dis die gesprek. As ons nou soos vanmiddag moet ek vir naam gaan haal dan sal ek by M Donalds aankom as ons dalk vir mekaar hallo sê dan is dit snaaks, anders gaan dit wees Hi, dan laai ek naam in die kar, dan ry ons. So kontak vir my is heeltemal geen gesprekke, geen niks ons vermy mekaar heeltemal op die stadium.*” (“If she calls me, yes why are you calling me, what do you want and what’s going on? But other

than that we don't have contact, not at all. It is literally a case of, I will send her a WhatsApp, at Mc Donald's at 5 o'clock, bye, or sometimes I will say Hi, Hi McDonald's at 5:30. That's the conversation. If we have to, like this afternoon I have to go fetch name, then I will get there if we maybe say hello then it would be funny, otherwise its Hi and I put him in the car and we leave. So contact for me is no conversations, nothing at the moment we are avoiding each other.")

It can be inferred that this participant seemed to limit the communication with his ex-partner and if the communication did not relate to his child, he avoided her at all costs. Another participant mentioned that she avoids all type of communication with her ex-husband in order to regulate emotions, as they disagree on seemingly everything. Participant two stated verbatim: "... it's always fighting, I can't phone him and speak to him. When I say something is blue he would say no it's pink ...So I had to give up because there was nothing".

When taking cognisance of the above-mentioned subthemes, it appears as if the participants found communication to be an aspect of the co-parenting relationship which poses a risk for conflict. It further seems plausible to infer that participants made use of avoidances in communication in order to regulate emotions pertaining to the co-parenting relationship as well as the other co-parent. It should be noted that information obtained from the above-mentioned seemingly suggests that the reason why the participants had the need to make use of avoidances within their communication with the co-parent is because the communication was characterised by conflict and their reason for avoiding communication was to avoid the experience of conflict with the ex-partner.

5.3 Conceptual adjustments

The second theme describes the participants' efforts to regulate their emotions by making use of conceptual adjustments. This emerged as a prominent theme as all the participants made use of conceptual adjustments in an attempt to regulate their emotions. Two subthemes are discussed in the following section, namely; reappraisal and redirecting focus.

Reappraisal

From the data collected, participants seemed to experience the need to make conceptual adjustments within the co-parenting relationship by purposefully adjusting the way they initially thought about a situation. Participant six demonstrated this by stating verbatim: “*Ek was half ontsteld omdat die huis opgebreek het, maar ek besef ook vir my is dit beter en vir my en my kind is dit ook beter. As ek gaan terugkyk hoe ons was, die mislikheid wat tussen ons was, die atmosfeer wat daar was...nou na 3 jaar besef ek, ek probeer hom nou grootmaak, nie draai teen haar of goeters nie, ek probeer hom grootmaak dat hy kan cope met die lewe se goeters*”. (“I was upset because of the home that had been broken but I realise that it is better for me and for the child as well. If I look back on how we were, the miserableness that was between us, the atmosphere that there was ... now after 3 years I realise...I try to raise him now, not turn him against her or stuff, I try to raise him so that he can cope with life’s stuff.”)

It can be argued that this participant seems to have changed his viewpoint from being upset about the divorce, to gaining the insight that the current situation is more conducive to him and his son. Furthermore, it seems as if he adjusted his initial negative viewpoint about the situation to a more positive view which can be argued to have a more positive impact on his co-parenting relationship with his ex-partner. Similarly, participant three stated verbatim that: “... *ek moes die kopskuif maak van it’s not going to define who I am en ek dink toe ek die kopskuif maak en besluit het om my trots en my mens wees te behou en dit nie te verloor nie as gevolg van iemand anders se foute het dit vir my die wêreld beteken dit het my begin sterk maak van binne*”. (“I had to make the shift in my head of its not going to define who I am and I think when I made that shift, and I decided to keep my pride and my humanity and not to lose it due to someone else’s mistakes, that meant the world to me and it started to make me stronger from the inside.”)

This participant seemed to have insight into the use of this emotion-regulating strategy in that she seemed to be able to identify the emotion-regulating strategy as a cognitive adjustment. It also seems to be noteworthy that she indicated that once she had made the conceptual adjustment, she experienced the positive impact of the adjustment made “*dit het my begin sterk maak van binne*”. Participant three also added verbatim

that: “... so ek het ‘n besluit geneem om ‘n positiewe staans in te neem wanneer ek met sake van my kinders te doen het, so ek is bly ek het dit gedoen want dit beïnvloed definetief hoe ek met hom kommunikeer positief.” She also mentioned verbatim that “*Ek kyk na die saak in drie-dimensioneel.*” (“... so I made a decision to take on a positive stance when dealing with situations concerning my children, I am glad that I did it because it definitely influences the way I communicate with him positively.”) (“I look at the situation three dimensionally.”)

The aforementioned highlights the participant’s use of making a deliberate conceptual adjustment (taking in a positive stance) in an effort to positively influence the co-parent relationship and its related dynamics. Participant three thus seemed to use reappraisal as an emotion-regulating strategy by redefining her thoughts about the divorce, in that she was not going to blame herself for the divorce but decided to take in a positive attitude towards her ex-partner and their co-parenting style.

Participant five also made a conceptual adjustment in that he mentioned verbatim “*Partykeer dan dink jy is dit so erg dat dit en dit gebeur in plaas van, nou moet jy dit doen*”. *So dis fine, lees eers jou hoofstuk klaar of luister nog ‘n song of whatever*”. (“Sometimes you think is it really that bad if this and this happens instead of, now you have to do this.” So it’s fine, finish the chapter you are reading, or listen to another song or whatever.”)

In the light of the above-mentioned it seems plausible to conclude that some participants made use of conceptual adjustments in that they adjusted their initial thought which usually seemed to be negative, to a more positive or conducive view of the situation, which in turn seemed to serve the best interest of all parties involved. Reappraisal was utilised by five out of the six participants therewith highlighting it as an important regulating strategy used by participants in this study

Redirecting focus

The accounts of the participants suggested that they attempted to regulate their emotions by means of redirecting their focus; more specifically it appeared as if they redirected their focus by focusing on other aspects of the situation to prevent an emotion (usually a negative emotion) from fully developing. Redirection of focus

emerged as a common theme throughout the data analysis. Participant two utilised redirecting focus as a means of regulating her emotions as she stated that, “It’s about (child’s name), it’s about her needs, ‘cos (sic) she loves her dad and she wants to see him. So my feelings about him is not going to change that”. Later on in the interview, participant two again mentioned verbatim that: “I am trying to protect you and this is what I’m protecting you from.” The context in which this statement was made referred to how the participant and her ex-partner co-parent. It should be noted that what participants viewed as the child’s best interest is subjective to their view of what was best for the child, their perspective and view of the ex-partner and their experience of divorce. In the first statement it seems evident that the participant redirected her focus from her own feelings to that of her child.

This point is illustrated further by participant four’s experience: “... *wat haar pa aanbetref, want ek wou haar, idealy sou ek haar wou weghou het. Die invloed, eintlik waar die invloed ingekom het is hy het aangekondig hy is ‘n atëis, en ek weet nie, net daar het iets in my dood gegaan*”. (“... regarding her dad, because I, ideally I would have kept her from him. The influence, actually where the influence came in, he announced that he is an atheist and I don’t know, something died in me right there.”) This participant seemed to experience that she would have to restrict her child from having contact with her father because of his lack of religion and the impact his choice had on her own feelings towards the father. However, she allowed contact because she felt that it was not about her feelings but that of her child. Participant three described her experience as: “*Ek dink oor die feite en die beskerming wat vir my dierbaar is, ek gaan nie in ‘n kat geveg betrokke raak byvoorbeeld nie, ek sal retreat as ek sien hierdie gaan nêrens heen nie dan sal ek dit daar laat en hy sal baie vinnig hoor ook as ek vir hom gesê het, ok maar jy fokus nie op wat ons sê nie so kom ons bespreek dit op ‘n ander dag as ek agterkom hy is holders te bolder, want hy reageer baie op emosies as hy moeg is*”. (“I think about the facts and the security that is precious to me, I am not going to get involved in a cat fight for example, I will retreat if I see that this is going nowhere, then I will leave it there and he will quickly hear if I have told him that, OK you are not focusing on what we are saying so let’s discuss it on a different day, when I realise that he is overwhelmed because he reacts on emotions when he is tired.”) In this regard, the participant seemed to concentrate on the facts of the situation rather than the highly intense emotions accompanying a

situation related to the co-parenting relationship: it can thus be postulated that redirecting her focus assisted the participant in regulating her emotions.

In conclusion, it can be argued that the participants who made use of redirecting focus as a form of cognitive adjustment appeared to be successful in altering their cognitions in an effort to regulate their emotions. Furthermore, it is hypothesised that the participants perceived experience of this emotion-regulating strategy seems to be having a positive impact on the co-parenting relationship.

5.4 Theme three: External behaviours

The third theme presents external behaviours utilised by participants in an attempt to regulate their emotions within the co-parenting relationship. Two subthemes were identified within this theme: adaptive behaviours and maladaptive behaviours. Adaptive behaviours refers to behaviours which is postulated to have a positive influence on the co-parenting relationship as oppose to maladaptive behaviours which is argued to have a negative or detrimental impact on the co-parenting relationship.

Adaptive external behaviours

It seems noteworthy that all six participants utilised adaptive behaviours in an attempt to regulate their emotions within the specific context of this study. As stated above, adaptive external behaviours is argued to assist the participants in successfully regulating their emotions and included a variety of behaviours.

Several of the participants experienced that communicating about their situation helped them to down regulate negative emotions experienced at that time. Participant two illustrated this subtheme as she indicated that "... we could say, and *braak* (puke) and get it out and say *ok nou het jy genoeg gebraak* (now you've puked enough) so that you get it out, you don't dwell on it *en dit word 'n sweer nie* (and it doesn't become a sore) (sic) yes it helped because it was talking to someone who understands. I also spoke to people who yes, they understood, but they (friends) fully understood, we helped it each, we carried each other, we were talking on WhatsApp and everything." Participant five also corroborates participant two's experience as he commented that, "*Ek hoef dit nie meer alleen te doen nie, dit voel vir my asof ek nie meer in 'n hoek*

gedryf is, want jy weet ek het van die begin af geen keuse gehad nie, ons huis is teen 'n verlies verkoop, sulke tipe goed, ek moes helfte van die skuld betaal sonder 'n inkomste daai tipe goed. So ek en sy (sy nuwe vrou) praat baie.” “I don't have to do it alone anymore, it doesn't feel like I'm in a corner anymore, because you know what, from the beginning I didn't have any choice, our house was sold at a loss, stuff like that, I had to pay most of the debt without an income, stuff like that. So she and I (his new wife) we talk a lot.”)

When considering these two participants experiences it can be inferred that talking about the situation to friends or someone who they experience as understanding might assist them in up regulating their negative emotions which seems to accompany the divorce related experiences and the co-parenting relationship.

Another external behaviour which was revealed by the dataset included the use of religion as an attempt to regulate emotions. Participant one seemed to experience that the practice of her religion and relationship with God assisted her in regulating her emotions. She asserted that “... *toe het ek tot bekering gekom, God het baie genesing gebring.*” On another occasion the participant mentioned that “... *ek (sic) file dit deur met God.*” (“...then I repented, God brought a lot of healing.” “I file it through with God.”) Participant two's comment seemed to corroborate participant one's experience as she verbalised that “*Ek gaan na my pastor and he is a life coach. So no more than every two months. Ek gaan sit daar en we go through all the things and I get them out. Ek bid, ek's 'n Christen so I use God and the word.*” “I go to my pastor and he is a life coach. So no more than every two months. I go sit there and we go through all the things and I get them out. I Pray, I'm a Christian so I use God and the word.” In the light of the above-mentioned it can thus be argued that religion and the relationship with God or religious activities might assist participants in regulating their emotion within the co-parenting context.

Another adaptive external behaviour which was noted on the dataset was counting and breathing. Participant three mentioned that counting to 10 and breathing deeply assisted her in thinking on her feet in a conversation with the other co-parent. She verbalised that “*dan sal ek tot 10 tel en diep asemhaal ... gelukkig in dieselfde gesprek nie 3 dae later nie... ek forseer myself om op my voete te dink in 'n situasie en dit reg te maak voor ek 'n foon neer sit ek kan nie dat daar dae verloop nie, ek werk nie so*

nie.” (“... then I will count to 10 and breathe deeply, luckily in the same conversation, not 3 days later. I force myself to think on my feet in a situation and try to fix it before I put down a phone, I can't let days' pass, I don't work like that.”)

Participant six mentioned verbatim that he will play guitar when he feels overwhelmed by negative emotions: “*Ek vat my kitaar en ek speel 'n bietjie*” (“I take my guitar and I play a bit.”) It can be argued that music might assist this participant in dealing with negative emotions relating to the co-parenting relationship.

Maladaptive external behaviours

Similar to the finding that all participants made use of adaptive external behaviours, all the participants also made use of maladaptive external behaviours as a means of regulating their emotions. In this context, maladaptive behaviours are actions which is proposed to result in unsuccessful emotional regulation.

Two participants made use of gratification behaviour as an emotion-regulating strategy which included overeating and spoiling a child. Participant two mentioned verbatim “You know if you are under high stress you don't exercise and I don't exercise. *Ek eet meer chocolates*”. “You know if you are under high stress you don't exercise and I don't exercise ... I eat more chocolates.”) This can be argued to be a maladaptive external behaviour as overeating is usually not regarded as a healthy way to regulate emotions. In addition, participant six made use of gratification behaviours in an attempt to regulate his emotions. He commented that “*As hy by my is het ons altyd Spur toe gegaan, vat hom Spur toe dat hy speel, dat hy homself geniet ... dan sê ek 'weet jy wat? jy's by my, kom ons gaan koop vir jou ietsie dan gaan koop ek vir hom 'n speelding of ek koop vir hom iets ons het altyd iets gaan saam doen, en soos die tyd aangaan sê ek vir myself ek moet dit nie doen nie, sulke tipe goed met hom doen nie, dan paat ek met myself en sê nee jy spoil hom nou....maar die Spur ding het ek heeltemal gesny, hy speel by maatjies of maatjies kom speel by hom. Die Spur is heeltemal uit. Waar ek dit letterlik elke naweek wat hy by my was het ons dit gedoen, Dit was of 'n Saterdag of 'n Sondag, that was it, it was a given ons gaan Spur toe.*” (“If he was with me, we always went to Spur, take him to Spur so that he can play, so that he can enjoy himself ... then I would say, you know what? you are with me lets go buy you something, then I would go buy him a toy or something, oh we always did

something together and as the time passes I told myself I shouldn't be doing this, these type of things, then I would talk to myself and tell myself you are spoiling him now ... but the Spur thing is totally out now. Where I literally use to do it every weekend if he was with me. It was either a Saturday or Sunday, it was a given we are going to Spur.”)

5.5 Conclusion

Chapter five discussed the findings from the data collected in this study. The findings were organised in themes and subthemes and discussed accordingly. From the analysis, it was clear that participants had nuanced experiences regarding emotional regulation in co-parenting. The first theme presented the participants experiences of avoidance as a means of emotional regulation within the co-parenting relationship. In the second theme, conceptual adjustments of the participants were explored. The third theme pertained to the external behaviours utilised by the participants. These findings are elaborated on in the next chapter, which offers an integrated discussion of the findings within the context of existing literature.

6. Chapter six: Discussion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses and links the findings presented in Chapter five. with relevant existing literature on divorcee's experience of emotional regulation within the co-parenting relationship. Noteworthy findings are presented regarding divorcees nuanced experiences of emotional regulating within the co-parenting relationship. Furthermore, the participants' emotion-regulating strategies were analysed by making use of the process model of emotional regulation (Gross, 2014). Findings obtained from the study suggest that divorcees make use of the entire array of emotional regulation strategies as proposed by Gross (2014). Therefore, in this section the different emotional regulation strategies utilised by the participants will be discussed in the light of the emotional regulation model postulated by Gross (2014). The chapter further addressed the research aims and questions of the study. The final section attends to the limitations of the study as well as recommendations for future studies.

6.2 Discussion of findings

Emotions are part of our everyday life. Hollenstein et al. (2013) maintained that a person's ability to exert a certain amount of control over emotions and to adapt to contextual demands is necessary for optimal emotional functioning. One such contextual demand where the regulation of emotions might play a pivotal role, is in a co-parenting relationship between divorcees. As discussed in chapter two, a divorce and the co-parenting relationship resulting from a divorce present a number of challenges for each co-parent. The findings - as set out in chapter five of this study - suggest that the participants made use of the following emotional regulations strategies when executing co-parenting responsibilities: avoidance, conceptual adjustments and external behaviours. The reader should note that very limited studies have been conducted on emotional regulation within the co-parenting context. This makes the comparison of findings within the same context rather difficult.

This study aims to describe the emotional regulation strategies used by participants in the light of Gross's model of emotional regulation (2014). As discussed in Chapter two, this model differentiates between antecedent focused emotional regulation and response focused emotional regulation. Antecedent emotional regulation takes place prior to the generation of the emotion whilst the response-focused emotional regulation takes place after the emotion is produced (Gross, 2015). This approach implies that different emotional regulation strategies should have different outcomes. Gross (1998) identified five strategies of emotional regulation: situation selection, situation modification, attentional deployment, cognitive change and response modulation (Gross, 2014). The data yielded from this research study was analysed by means of the five previously mentioned strategies.

6.2.1 Avoidance

Most participants in this study made use of avoidance as an emotion-regulating strategy. The findings suggested that participants made use of both physical avoidance as well as avoidances in their communication with the other co-parent, in an effort to regulate their emotions. It is postulated that avoidance can be seen as a situation selection strategy. Situation selection in Gross's model (2014) refers to avoiding a situation with the aim of preventing the development of an unwanted emotion. These situations may include, individuals, places and/or objects (Palmer & Alfano, 2017). In this context, it seems as if participants mainly attempted to physically avoid being in the presence of their ex-partner in order to avoid conflict that could lead to unwanted emotions. Findings further indicated that some participants avoided certain topics or situations with their ex-partner in an attempt to regulate their emotions. For example, by relaying selective information to the co-parent, therewith restricting communication with the co-parent to co-parenting and child rearing-related matters (the participant thus limits the communication to factual and non-emotional aspects); or limited the communication in general with the co-parent. As explained in chapter two, divorce and the related process can result in emotional turmoil for the divorcees (Allen and Hawkins, 2017), and if not limited the communication between the divorced co-parents can fixate on their own emotions and anger or other negative feelings. This often overrides the co-parenting communication if not attended to (Eddy

et al., 2020). When considering the above-mentioned, avoidance can be seen as an adaptive and successful manner of regulating one's emotions, as it enables an individual to prevent the negative emotion which would result from the encounter. However, a study conducted by Baros et al. (2015) postulated that parents' utilisation of situation selection might not always be viewed as a productive or successful emotional regulation strategy, as it might be difficult to effectively decide which situations to avoid and which not. Baros et al. (2015) suggests that some situations would require a more practical solution for example instead of avoiding a potential conflict conversation completely- make use of an e-mail to relay the information as suggested by authors of co-parenting such as Stahl (2008). Baros et al. (2015) further propose that individuals who suffer from anxiety might be prone to choosing this emotional regulating strategy too often and to the detriment of the overall parental responsibilities.

Although this study did not focus on whether the individuals who makes use of situation selection as an emotional regulation strategy suffer from anxiety, it might be valuable to investigate this aspect in future studies. It might also be valuable to conduct research on whether these individuals make excessive use of situation selection to the detriment of the co-parenting relationship and responsibilities. However, it is argued that the flexible use and employment of an emotion regulation strategy in line with an individual's unique regulatory goal may be regarded as more important than the use of a specific strategy per se (Visted et al., 2018). The authors thus suggested that a specific emotion regulating strategy should thus be viewed as either adaptive or maladaptive according to the context in which it is used. In the light of the aforementioned, the participant's goal with the selection of avoidance should thus be considered before the emotional regulation strategy can be labelled as either adaptive or maladaptive.

In this study, the findings seemingly indicated that physical avoidance appeared to contribute to successful emotional regulation. However, avoidances in communication might be argued to have both positive and negative outcomes. As discussed in chapter five, when only selective communication or information is provided to the other co-parent, it might result in feelings of exclusion for that co-parent. Stahl (2008) suggests that although limited communication between co-parents might prove to contribute to a positive co-parenting relationship, co-parents are advised to communicate all

relevant and important information pertaining to the child to each other, as it is argued that it would improve the co-parenting relationship.

As discussed in chapter two, high levels of conflict between parents has been argued to have an adverse impact on children's adjustment to divorce as well as to their general wellbeing (Lamela et al., 2016). It can thus be postulated that parents who makes use of an emotional regulating strategy with the aim of avoiding conflict might prove to not only benefit the co-parenting relationship but also the emotional wellbeing of the children involved. Alpaslan (2018) conducted a South African study on reframing the death of the marital relationship as an opportunity for growth by developing a program for facilitating post—divorce adjustment. Successful adjustment to divorce includes making changes to the communication within the co-parenting relationship; specifically changing the manner of communication from an emotionally-loaded context to keeping the communication direct, to-the-point and less emotional. It can thus be hypothesised that by making changes to the communication between the co-parents, co-parents might be able to regulate emotions more successfully.

6.2.2 Conceptual adjustments

The findings of this study highlighted participants' experience of making use of conceptual adjustments within the co-parenting context. Conceptual adjustments identified in this study included reappraisal and redirecting focus. The model used in this study in order to analyse the themes identified (Gross, 2014), describes these conceptual adjustments as antecedent emotional regulating strategies as it includes making conceptual adjustments as the situation has already unfolded. In his model he refers to reappraisal as an antecedent emotion-regulating strategy (Gross, 2014).

All the participants made conceptual adjustments in the form of either reappraisal or redirecting of focus. Reappraisal is defined by Igna and Stefan (2015) as altering the initial evaluation of an emotion-producing situation with the intent to change the emotional impact. Participants who were able to reappraise the divorce and emotions that accompany the divorce to a more positive view, are argued to be more successful in their emotional regulation when confronted with their ex-partner and co-parenting tasks. They were able to move past their hurt and viewed the divorce as an incident which occurred but which would not define them. It is important to note that most of

the participants made a conscious decision to reappraise their view and attitude towards the divorce: it did not come automatically.

Research suggests that successful adjustment to divorce includes redefining the divorce from a crisis to an opportunity for growth (Alpaslan, 2018). The author asserts this is usually a difficult task for the divorcees and that his therapeutic programme places emphasis on this aspect as some divorcees struggle with viewing the divorce as an opportunity for growth. Baros et al. (2015) also regard reappraisal as one of the emotional regulation strategies which yield the most success in a parenting context. Bahrami et al. (2020) conducted a study where they evaluated the impact of emotional regulation training based on the Gross model, amongst parents of children with cancer. They found that by making use of reappraisal as an emotional regulation technique the parents' anxiety decreased. Although the aforementioned study made use of a different population from this study it is hypothesised that the participants in this study who made use of reappraisal might have been successful in regulating their emotions.

Participants in this study who made use of redirecting of focus by consciously deciding to focus on the child and the best interest of the child in a situation, rather than on their own subjective feelings, are argued to be more successful in regulating their emotions. It is further hypothesised that this might have resulted in a positive co-parenting relationship between the divorcees. Alpaslan (2018) noted that focusing attention on the children and their needs by developing a post-divorce parenting plan forms part of successful post-divorce adjustment. His study thus corroborates the findings of this study. Another study supporting this finding was conducted by Willen et al. (2015). The authors found that divorced co-parents who are able to employ flexible emotional regulation strategies such as attentional deployment and focusing on the children rather than the emotional turmoil caused by the divorce, experience successful emotional regulation. Millings et al. (2020) conceptualised a model that describes a divorcee's emotional adaption to relationship dissolution. They posited that emotional adaptation to relationship dissolution requires refocusing attention from the past to the future, which includes being more child-orientated. This corroborates with findings from this study.

The use of avoidance and conceptual adjustments as emotional regulating strategies is regarded as the most successful emotional regulation strategies, as they are employed before the emotion has fully developed (Aldoa, 2013). It is thus suggested that participants who utilise these strategies are probably more successful in regulating their emotions relating to the co-parenting relationship. Other research relating to divorcees and emotional regulation suggested that divorcees who were able to employ antecedent emotional regulation strategies were more effective in their co-parenting relationships. These strategies included changing their thoughts about their ex-partner, focusing on the needs and feelings of the children and being selective about conflict situations pertaining to finances and emotional resources, as well as being able to move forward and beyond the emotional challenges which result from a divorce (Jamison et al., 2014). These findings thus corroborate the assumption that participants in this study who made use of antecedent emotion-regulating strategies were probably more effective in regulating their emotions.

Furthermore, it is worth highlighting that literature on co-parenting styles postulates that co-parents who are able to show support to the other parent and who have a positive view of the other co-parent, contribute to a cooperative co-parenting relationship (Lamela, 2016). It thus seems plausible that participants who made use of conceptual adjustments with the aim of adjusting their negative view of the co-parent relationship or co-parent, might prove to positively impact the co-parenting relationship. This might also have positive long term outcomes for all parties involved.

6.2.3 External behaviours

Participants experienced external behaviours as a means of regulating their emotions. External behaviours in this study refers to strategies focusing on a change in an individual's behaviour, with the goal of regulating the emotion which has already fully developed. Gross (2014)'s model refers to these behaviours as response-focused emotional regulating strategies. These behaviours can either have an adaptive or maladaptive outcome on the individual or in the context of this study on the co-parenting relationship (Aldoa, 2013). Palmer and Alfano (2017) describe response-focused emotional regulation strategies as an attempt to alter a behavioural or physical reaction to the experienced emotion. This particular type of emotion-regulating

strategy requires more resources and effort from the individual and is argued to offer fewer chances to regulate (Palmer & Alfano, 2017)

Participants' accounts highlighted the use of both perceived adaptive and maladaptive external behaviours in relation to regulating their emotions. As a result, two subthemes are discussed.

Findings from the interviews suggested that participants made use of communication, religion, counting and breathing as well as the use of music in an attempt to regulate emotions. Adaptive external behaviours emerged as a prominent theme within the dataset.

Communicating with a trusted or familiar person especially if this person is going through the same ordeal seemed to assist the participants regulating their emotions. In this, they experienced a sense of community and understanding which is argued to bring along emotional relieve. This aligns with findings from a study conducted by Livingstone & Srivastava (2012) who found that talking to a person has been linked with positive emotional regulation outcomes. It thus seemed as if communication about their situation might have assisted the participants in successfully regulating their emotions.

Another external behaviour noted in participants' accounts is making use of religion in order to regulate emotions. Literature describes this as "betterment" which is also known as an up-regulating strategy that includes being involved in religious activities or using religion as an up-regulating strategy (Livingstone and Srivastava, 2012). Findings from this study suggest that some of the divorced co-parents turned to religion or a higher power to assist them in up-regulating negative emotions and to bring them a sense of peace and forgiveness about the past and hope for their future.

Simonic (2017) supports this view and posited that positive forms of religious coping includes praying and worshipping as well as forgiveness for self and the ex-partner. Contradictorily she also found that religion can also impede a divorcees wellbeing and adaption to the divorce in that they might experience the divorce as a punishment from God and a lack of holiness, as well as a loss of trust in God as an almighty God who can prevent such traumas. In the experience of some of the participants in this study, religion appeared to assist them in successfully regulating their emotions. Other

research suggests that it can also have negative outcomes when used as a response-focused emotional regulation strategy (Simonic, 2017).

In alignment with the findings of this study, Bonach (2007) proposed that the co-parenting relationship can be improved by means of forgiveness. She suggested that in order to forgive the wrongs done during the marriage or divorce process, former partners have to 1) reassess and alter their viewpoint of the ex-partner and reasons why the divorce took place and develop a realistic viewpoint of the situation, 2) make a conscious decision to let go of anger and negative feelings towards the former partner and 3) actively change their behaviour towards the ex-partner in order to function as cooperative co-parents. In the experience of the participants, forgiveness seemed to assist them in regulating their emotions more effectively within the co-parenting relationship.

Participants also made use of other specific external behaviours including counting and breathing activities as well as playing music as emotion-regulating strategies. Information obtained from the interviews suggested that these activities appeared to assist them with regulating their emotions successfully. These external behaviours are also regarded as response-focused emotional regulation strategies according to Gross's process model of emotional regulation (Gross, 2015). The use of the aforementioned emotional regulating activities has been correlated with positive outcomes and is well known for assisting individuals in regulating emotions. (Koole, 2009; Metz et al., 2013; Gross 2014, & Sakka and Juslin, 2018). A significant relationship exists between the aforementioned external behaviours and positive emotional wellbeing (Moore et al., 2011; Hricova & Lovas, 2018). These authors conceptualised a new term called self-care-self-regulation. They posited that self-care was directly related to self-regulation. In their study they suggested that self-care-self-regulation includes activities such as taking care of your mental health (through activities such as music and deep breathing) and body and that these activities promote general wellbeing. The perceived benefit of these external behaviours experienced by participants in this study thus seems to correlate with findings from previous studies such as the aforementioned.

Findings from this study indicated that, although all of the participants were able to employ external adaptive behaviours as emotional regulation strategies with positive

outcomes, they also made use of external maladaptive behaviours. One such emotion-regulating strategy identified was gratification. Participants who utilised gratification as an emotion-regulating strategy indicated that, in their experience, their gratification behaviours were linked to negative outcomes. Literature describes gratification behaviours as “indulgence”. It is noteworthy that it is originally identified as an up-regulating strategy. It is however, associated with mostly negative long-term outcomes (Livingstone and Srivastava, 2012). Two forms of gratification were used by the participants: emotional eating and overcompensating by spoiling a child. While both of these emotional regulating strategies seemed to alleviate some of the emotional turmoil experienced by the participants, the relief was short term in their experience and is argued to result in long term negative outcomes such as being overweight and experiencing financial losses (Gross, 2014 & Van Overland, 2016). A study conducted by Evers et al. (2010) supports the findings of this study. The authors noted that prior to emotional or binge eating, individuals usually experience a negative or undesired emotion, which they are unable to regulate effectively. As a result, they turn to a strategy they are familiar with and which is easily accessible: eating. Emotional or binge eating is then utilised as a maladaptive emotional regulating strategy. The core of the phenomenon, according to the authors, is thus that the individual has limited adaptive emotion-regulation strategies available for employment. They propose that education on adaptive external behaviours as emotional regulating strategies can therefore assist these individuals.

In the view of the participants perceived experiences of successful emotional regulation it seems plausible that some of the participants were able to successfully regulate their emotions at some times, however it is also noteworthy that they all failed at regulating their emotions successfully at some point. The process model of emotional regulation proposes that emotional regulation is more successful when strategies are employed earlier on in the emotion-generating process (antecedent emotion-regulation strategies) and less successful when employed later on when the emotion has already fully developed (response-focused strategies). It is thus suggested that failing to successfully regulate emotions at some point is expected, and can be seen as a normal phenomenon (Gross, 2014). When considering the challenging context in which individuals in this study were required to regulate their emotions, it is also understandable why they were not successful at emotional

regulation all the time, as literature has described the experience of a divorce as the second most traumatic experience for an individual after losing a partner to death (Amato, 2000). In addition, co-parenting is also seen as a challenging experience, especially if the co-parents struggle to move past their anger and losses related to the divorce (Willen, 2015, Hertzmann et al., (2016).

6.3 Limitations of this study

Although the number of participants used in a qualitative study can be limited, the researcher is of the opinion that the limited number of participants used in this study makes it difficult to make broad assumptions and generalisations about divorced co-parents in South Africa. Another limitation of this study might be that the data retrieved from the co-parents might have been biased, as their former partner (the other co-parent) was not involved in this study and might have provided insight into other aspects of the co-parenting relationship and the regulation of emotions in the said co-parenting relationship. This study did not include follow-up interviews with the participants in following months or years. This might be seen as a limitation, as no comparison could be made between possible differences in the utilisation and employment of emotional regulation strategies as time passes.

6.4 Future recommendations

Based on the findings of the study as well as the above-mentioned limitations, future recommendations include that a longitudinal study be conducted to gain insight as to how divorced co-parents regulate their emotions differently during and post- divorce, when executing co-parenting responsibilities. In addition, involving the other co-parent in the study might provide insight into the dynamics of the co-parenting relationship, as well as whether the co-parents make use of the same emotional regulation strategies and whether they experience the other co-parent as being able to regulate their emotions within the co-parenting context or not.

Research on divorced co-parents and programs to assist divorced co-parents are scant in South Africa. It is thus further recommended that based on the findings of this study, a therapeutic program assisting divorced co-parents to gain insight into effective

and non-effective emotional regulating strategies be developed. The programme should also focus on the importance and value of forgiveness and moving past the hurt and emotional turmoil caused by the divorce in order to regulate emotions more successfully when confronted with co-parenting responsibilities and tasks.

References

- Ahrons, C. R. (1980). Divorce: A crisis of family transition and change. *Family Relations*, 29(4), 533-540. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/584469>
- Ahrons, C. R. (1983). Divorce: Before, during and after. In H. McCubbin, & C. R. Figley (Eds.), *Stress and the family* (pp. 102-115). Brunner/Mazel.
- Ahrons, C. R. (2007). Family ties after divorce: Long term implications for children. *Family Process*, 46(1), 53-65. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1545-5300.2006.00191.x>
- Aldao, A. (2012). Emotion regulation strategies as transdiagnostic processes: A closer look at the invariance of their form and function. *Revista de Psicopatología y Psicología Clínica*, 17(3), 261–277. <https://dx.doi.org/10.5944/rppc.vol.17.num.3.2012.11843>
- Aldoa, A. (2013). The Future of Emotional Regulation Research: Capturing context. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 8(2), 155-172. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1745691612439518>
- Aldoa, A., Nolen-Hoeksema, S., & Schweizer, S. (2010). Emotion Regulation Strategies across psychopathology: A meta-analytical review. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 30(2), 217-237. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.200911.004>
- Alhojailan, M., I. (2012). Thematic Analysis: A critical review of its process and evaluation. *West East Journal of Social Sciences*, 1(1), 39-47.
- Allen, S., & Hawkins, A. (2017). Theorising the decision making process for divorce or reconciliation. *Journal of Family Theory and Review*, 9(1), 50-68. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/jftr.12176>
- Alpaslan, A., N. (2018). Reframing the death of the marital relationship as an opportunity for growth: a programme for facilitating post-divorce adjustment. *Social Work/ Maatskaplike werk*, 54(3): 308-326. <https://doi.org.10.15270/54-3-651>
- Alswaari, A. (2014). A critical review of qualitative interviews. *European Journal of Business and Social Sciences*, 3(4), 149-156. <https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2819536>

Amato, P. R. (2000). The consequences of divorce for adults and children. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 62(4), 1269-1287.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2000.01269.x>

Amato, P. R. (2010). Research on divorce: Continuing trends and new developments. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 72, 650–666.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2010.00723.x>

Amato, P. R., & De Boer, D. D. (2001). The transmission of marital instability across generations: relationship skills or commitment to marriage. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 63(4), 1038-1051.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2001.01038.x>

Amato, P. R., Kane, J. B., & James, S. (2011). Reconsidering the “good divorce”. *Family Relations*, 60(5), 511-524.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3729.2011.00666.x>

American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.). American Psychiatric Publishing.

Anney, V. N. (2014). Ensuring the quality of the findings of qualitative research: Looking at trustworthiness criteria. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies*, 5(2), 272-281.

<http://jeteraps.scholarlinkresearch.com/articles/Ensuring the Quality of the Findings of Qualitative Research/NEW.pdf>

Anthony, C. J., DiPerna, J.C., & Amato, P. R. (2014). Divorce, approaches to learning and children’s academic achievement: A longitudinal analysis of mediated and moderated effects. *Journal of School Psychology*, 52(3), 249-261.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2014.03.003>

Asanjarani, F., Jazayeri, R., Fatehizade, M., Etemadi, O., & Demol, J. (2017). Exploring Factors Affecting Post-Divorce Adjustment in Iranian Women: A Qualitative Study. *Social Determinants of Health*, 3(1), 15-25.

<https://doi.org/10.22037/sdh.v3i1.17705>

Bahrami, S., Sheikhi, M., Baglooi, M. M., & Mafi, M. (2020). Effect of emotion regulation training based on the Gross model on anxiety among parents of children with cancer, *Evidence Based Care Journal*, 9(4):40-47.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.22038/ebcj.2020.42462.2138>

Baker, S., & Edwards, R. (2012). How many qualitative interviews is enough? *National centre for research methods review paper*, 1-42.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822x05279903>

Barros, L., Goes, A. R., & Periera, A. I. (2015). Parental self-regulation, emotional regulation and temperament: Implications for intervention. *Estudos de Psicologia I Campinas*, 32(2), 295-306.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/0103-166X2015000200013>

Barth, J. C. (1988). Family therapists' dilemma: Systems theory with divorcing couples. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 1(4), 469-475.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/h0084982>

Baxter, P., & Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative Case Study Methodology: Study design and implementation for novice researchers. *The Qualitative Report*, 13(4), 544-559.

<http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR13-4/baxter.pdf>

Becher, E. H., Kim, H., Cronin, S. E., Deenanath, V., McGuire, J. K., McCann, I. M., & Powell, S. (2019). Positive parenting and parental conflict: Contributions to resilient co-parenting during divorce. *Family Relations*, 68(1), 150-164.

<https://dx.doi.org/10.1111/fare.12349>

Berking, M., & Whitley, B. (2014). Emotion Regulation: Definition and Relevance for Mental Health. In *Affect Regulation Training* Springer: New York.

Blandford, A. (2013). Semi-structured qualitative studies. In: Soegaard, Mads and Dam, Rikke, Friis (eds.). *The Encyclopaedia of Human-Computer Interaction (2nd ed.)*. Aarhus, Denmark: The Interaction Design Foundation.

Bohannon. P. (1970). The six stations of divorce. In P. Bohannon (Eds.), *Divorce and after* (pp. 29-55). Doubleday.

Bonach, K. (2005). Factors contributing to quality co-parenting: Implications for family policy. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*, 43(4), 79-104.

http://dx.doi.org/10.1300/J087v43n03_05

Bonach, K. (2007). Forgiveness intervention model: Application to co-parenting post-divorce. *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage*, 48(1), 105-123.

http://dx.doi.org/10.1300/J087v48n01_06

Bosse, T., & Pontier, M., & Treur, J. (2007). A computational model for Adaptive emotion regulation. Proceedings of the IEEE/WIC/ACM International conference on Intelligent Technology IAT 2007, 289-293.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1109/IAT.2007.29>

Boyatzis, R. E. (1998). Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development. Sage.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2),77-101.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp0630a>

Brown, J. R., & Rudestam, K. E. (2011). The role of forgiveness in divorce adjustment and the impact of affect. *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage*, 52(2), 109-124.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10502556.2011.546233>

Campbell-Sills, L., & Barlow, D. H. (2007). Incorporating emotion regulation into conceptualizations and treatments of anxiety and mood disorders. In J. J. Gross (Ed.), *Handbook of emotion regulation* (pp. 542–559). Guilford Press.

Cavanagh, M., Quinn, D., Duncan, D., Graham, T., & Balbuena, L. (2014).

Oppositional Defiant Disorder is better characterised as a Disorder of Emotional Regulation. *Journal of Attention Disorders*, 21(5), 1-9.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1087054713520221>

Chambers, A., & Allen, J. J. B. (2007). Cardiac vagal control, emotion, psychopathology, and health. *Biological Psychology*, 74(2), 113–115.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.biopsycho.2006.09.004>.

Choi, J. K., & Foged, J. (2017). Co-parenting for successful kids. *Journal of extension*, 55(6).

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/32223432Coparentingforsuccessfulkidsimpactsandimplications>

Choi, J., Hatton-Bowers, H., Burton, A., Brand, G., Reddish, L., Poppe, L. M. (2018). A qualitative evaluation to improve the co-parenting for successful kids' program. *Journal of Human Sciences and Extensions*, 6(3),122-136.

https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/c8fe6e_b8bb7f1454fc41d9b395ff77bf5b387a.pdf

Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2013). Teaching thematic analysis: Overcoming challenges and developing strategies for effective learning. *The Psychologist*, 26(2),120-123. <http://eprints.uwe.ac.uk/21155>

Collardeau, F., & Ehrenberg, M. (2016). Parental divorce and attitudes and feelings toward marriage and divorce in emerging adulthood: New insights from a multiway-frequency analysis. *Journal of European Psychology Students*, 7(1), 24-33. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/jeps.341>

Compas, B., Jaser, S., Dunbar, J., Watson, K., Bettis, A., Gruhn, M., & Williams, E. (2014). Coping and emotion regulation from Childhood to Early adulthood: Points of convergence and divergence. *Australian Journal Psychology*, 66(2), 71-8. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/ajpy.12043>

Cronin, C. (2014). Using case study research as a rigorous form of inquiry. *Nurse Research*, 21(5), 19-27. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7748/nr.21.5.19e1240>

Crowe, S., Creswell, K., Robertson, A., Huby, G., Avery, A., & Sheikh, A. (2011). The case study approach. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*,11(100), 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2288-11-100>

de Vos, A. S., Strydom, H., Fouchè, C.B., & Delport, C.S. L. (2015). *Research at grass roots: For the social sciences and human science professions. (4th ed.)*. Van Schaick Publishers.

Divorce Act 70 of 1979 (Republic of South Africa, Government Gazette)

Doss, B. D., Cicila, L. N., Morrison, K. R., Hsueh, A. C., & Carhart, K. (2014). A randomised controlled trial of brief co-parenting and relationship interventions during the transition to parenthood. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 28(4), 483-494. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0037311>

Douglas, V. I. (2020). Review on the effects of divorce on children. *Journal of current Issues in Arts and Humanities*, 6(1), 67-74. <https://www.idosr.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/IDOSR-JCIAH-6167-74-2020.pdf>

Dvir, Y., Ford, J.D., Hill, M., & Frazier, J. A. (2014). Childhood maltreatment, emotional dysregulation, and psychiatric comorbidities. *Harvard Review of Psychiatry*, 22(3), 61-149. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1097/HRP.0000000000000014>

Eddy, B., Burns, A., & Chafin, K. (2020). *Biff for Co-parent communication: Your guide to difficult texts, emails and social media posts*. HCI Press.

Estevez, A., Jauregui, P., Sanchez-Marcos, I., Lopez-Gonzalez, H. & Griffiths, M., D. (2017). Attachment and emotion regulation in substance addictions and behavioural addictions. *Journal of Behavioural Addictions*, 6(4), 534-544. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1556/2006.6.2017.086>

Everett, C., & Lee, R. E. (2014). *When marriages fail: Systemic family therapy interventions and issues*. Routledge.

Evers, C., de Ridder, D., & Stok, M. (2010). Feeding your feelings: Emotion regulation strategies and emotional eating. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 36(6).792-804. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0146167210371383>

Fairburn, C.G., Norman, P. A., Welch, S. L., O'Connor, M. R., Doll, H. A., & Peveler, R. C. (1995). A prospective study of outcome in bulimia nervosa and the long-term effects of three psychological treatments. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 52(4), 304–312. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1001/arch-psyc.1995.03950160054010>

Feinberg, M. E. (2002). Co-parenting and the transition to parenthood: a framework for prevention. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, 5, 173–195. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1023/A:1019695015110>

Feinberg, M. E. (2003). The internal structure and ecological context of co-parenting: A framework for research and intervention. *Parenting: Science and Practice*, 3, 95-132. http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/S15327922PAR0302_01

Feinberg, M. E., & Kan, M. L. (2008). Establishing family foundations: Intervention effects on co-parenting, parent/infant wellbeing and parent child relations. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 22(2), 253-263. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0893-3200.22.2.253>

Feinberg, M., Brown, L., & Kan, M. (2012). A multi-domain self-report measure of co-parenting. *Parenting: Science and Practice, 12*(1),1–21.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15295192.2012.638870>

Feinberg, M., Jones, D., Hostetler, M., & Paul, I. (2016). Couple-focused prevention at the transition to parenthood, a randomized trial: Effects on co-parenting, parenting, family violence, and parent and child adjustment. *Prevention Science, 17*(6), 751-764.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11121-016-0674-z>

Fernandez, K. C., Jazaieri, H., & Gross, J.J. (2016). Emotion regulation: A transdiagnostic perspective on a new RDoC domain. *Cognitive Therapy and Research, 40*(3), 426-440.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10608-016-9772-2>

Finlay-Jones, A.L, Rees, C. S., & Kane, R.T. (2015). Self-Compassion, emotion regulation and stress among Australian psychologists: Testing an emotion regulation model of self-compassion using structural equation modeling. *PLOS ONE 10*(7), e0133481.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0133481>

Ford, B. Q., & Mauss, I. B. (2015). Culture and emotion regulation. *Current Opinion in Psychology, 3*,1-5.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.copsy.2014.12.004>

Gaganpreet, S. (2017). Pros and cons of different sampling techniques. *International Journal of Applied Research, 3*(7),749-752.

Gardner, R. (1998). *The parental alienation syndrome: A guide for mental health and legal professionals*. Creative Therapeutics.

Glenn, C. R., & Klonsky, E. D. (2009) Emotion dysregulation as a core feature of borderline personality disorder. *Journal of Personality Disorders, 23*(1), 20-28.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1521/pedi.2009.23.1.20>

Gratz, K. L., & Roemer, L. (2004). Multidimensional assessment of emotion regulation and dysregulation: Development, factor structure and initial validation of the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale. *Journal of Psychopathology and*

Behavioral Assessment, 26(1), 41-54.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10862-008-9102-4>

Gratz, K. L., & Tull, M. T. (2010). Emotion regulation as a mechanism of change in Acceptance-and Mindfulness Based treatments. In R. A. Baer (Ed.), *Assessing mindfulness and acceptance: Illuminating the processes of change*. (pp.107-133). New Harbinger.

Grecucci, A., Theuninck, A., Frederickson, J., & Job, R. (2015). Mechanisms of social emotion regulation: From neuroscience to psychotherapy. Emotion regulation: Processes, cognitive effects and social consequences, *In Handbook of Emotion Regulation*. (pp.57-84). Nova Publishers.

Gross, J. J. (1998). The Emerging Field of Emotional Regulation: An integrative review. *Review of General Psychology*, 2(3), 271-299.

<http://dx.doi.org/1089-2680/98>

Gross, J. J. (1999). Emotion Regulation: Past, Present, Future. *Cognition and Emotion*, 13(5), 551-573.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/026999399379186>

Gross, J. J. (2002). Emotion Regulation: Affective, cognitive and social consequences. *Psychophysiology*, 39(3), 281-291.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1017.500485721393198>

Gross, J. J. (2013). Emotion Regulation: Taking stock and moving forward. *Emotion*, 13(3), 359-365.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0032135>

Gross, J. J. (2014). Emotion regulation: Conceptual and empirical foundations. In J. J. Gross (Ed.), *Handbook of emotion regulation* (2nd ed.) (pp. 3–20). Guilford Press.

Gross, J. J. (2015). The extended Process Model of Emotional Regulation: Elaborations, Applications and Future Directions. *Psychological Inquiry*, 26(1), 130-137.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1047840x.2015.989751>

Gross, J. J., & Thompson, R. A. (2007). Emotion regulation: Conceptual foundations. In J. J. Gross (Ed.), *Handbook of emotion regulation* (pp.3–24). Guilford Press.

Gross, J. J., Richards, J. M., & John, O. P. (2006). Emotion regulation in everyday life. In D. K. Snyder, J. A. Simpsons, & J. N. Hughes (Eds.), *Emotion regulation in couples and families: Pathways to dysfunction and health* (pp.13-35). American Psychological Association.

Gross, J. J., Sheppes, G., & Urry, H. L. (2011). Emotion generation and emotion regulation: A distinction we should make (carefully). *Cognition and Emotion*, 25(5), 765–781.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02699931.2011.555753>

Gross, J.J. (2014). *Handbook of Emotion Regulation* (2nd edition). Guilford Press.

Gunawan, J. (2015). Ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Belitung Nursing Journal*, 1(1), 10-11.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.33546/bnj.4>

Hadi, M.A., & Closs, S.J. (2015). Ensuring rigour and trustworthiness of qualitative research in clinical pharmacy. *International Journal of Clinical Pharmacy*, 28(3)

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11096-015-0237-6>

Hardesty, J. L., Raffaelli, M., Khaw, L., Thomann-Mitchell, E., Haselchwerdt, M. L., & Crossman, K. A. (2012). An integrative theoretical model of intimate partner violence, co-parenting after separation, and maternal and child well-being. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 4(4), 318–331.

<https://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1756-2589.2012.00139.x>

Hardesty, J. L., Crossman, K. A., Khaw, L., & Raffaelli, M. (2016). Marital violence and co-parenting quality after separation. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 30(3), 320–330.

<https://dx.doi.org/10.1037/fam0000132>

Henig, L. F. (2013) Four fathers' experiences of parental alienation, University of South Africa, Pretoria, <http://hdl.handle.net/10500/12066>

Hertzmann, L., Hewison, D., Casey, P., Target, M., Fearon, P., & Lassri, D. (2016). Mentalization – based therapy for parents in entrenched conflict: A random allocation feasibility study. *Psychotherapy*, 53(4), 388-401.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/pst0000092>

Hock, R. M., & Mooradian, J. K. (2013). Defining co-parenting for Social Work practice: A critical interpretative synthesis. *Journal of Family Social Work, 16*(4), 314-331. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10522158.2013.795920>

Hollenstein, T., Lichtwarck-Aschoff, A., & Potworowski, G. (2013). A model of socioemotional flexibility at three time scales. *Emotion Review, 5*(4), 397-405. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1754073913484181>

Hricova, M., & Lovas, L. (2018). Self-Care-Self-Regulation. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Research, 7*, 3-89.

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/322525679Selfcareselfregulation>

Igna, R, & Stefan, S. (2015). Comparing cognitive strategies in the process of emotional regulation. *Journal of Evidence-based Psychotherapies, 15*(2), 251-266. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/288362848Comparingcognitivestrategiesint heprocessofemotionregulation>

Jacob, S. A., & Furgerson, S.P. (2012). Writing interview protocols and Conducting interviews: Tips for students new to the field of Qualitative Research. *The Qualitative Report, 17*(42),1-10.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2012.1718>

James, W. (1884). What is an Emotion. *Mind, 9*(24), 188-205.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2246769>

Jamison, T. B., Coleman, M., Ganong, L. H., & Feistman, R.E. (2014). Transitioning to post-divorce family life: A grounded theory investigation of resilience in co-parenting. *Family Relations: An interdisciplinary Journal of Applied Family Studies, 63*(3), 411-423.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.12074>

Kalmijn, M. (2013). Long-term effects of divorce on parent–child relationships: within-family comparisons of fathers and mothers. *European Sociological Review, 29*(5), 888-898. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcs066>

Kanel, K. (2012). *A guide to crisis intervention*. Brooks/Cole

Kaslow, F. W. (1980). Stages of divorce: A psychological perspective. *Villanova Law Review*, 25(25), 718-751.

<http://digitalcommons.law.villanova.edu/vlr/vol25/iss4/6>

Kaslow, F. W., Mikesell, R. H., Lusteran, D., & McDaniel, S. H. (Ed). (1995). *Integrating family therapy: Handbook of family psychology and systems theory*. American Psychological Association.

Kay, S. A. (2016). Emotion regulation and resilience: Overlooked connections. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, 9(2), 411-415.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/iop.2016.31>

Kelly, J., & Johnson, J. (2008). Differentiation among types of intimate partner violence: Research update. *Family Court Review*, 46(3), 476 – 499.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-1617.2008.00215.x>

Kessler, S. (1975). *The American way of divorce: Prescriptions for change*. Nelson-Hall.

Kim, J. Y., & Tasker, F. (2013). The effects of parental divorce: A culture-specific challenge for young adults in South Korea. *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage*, 54 (5), 349-362.

<https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10502556.2013.800387>

Koole, S., L. (2009). The psychology of emotion regulation: An integrative review. *Cognitions and Emotions*, 23(1), 4-41.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02699930802619031>

Koole, S.L., & Rothermund, K. (2011). “I feel better but I don’t know why”: The psychology of implicit emotion regulation. *Cognition & Emotion*, 25(3), 389–399.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02699931.2010.550505>

Krumrei, E. J., Mahoney, A., & Pargament, K. (2011). Spiritual stress and coping model of divorce: A longitudinal study. *Journal of family psychology*, 25(26), 973-985.

<https://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0025879>

Kübler-Ross. E. (1969). *On death and dying*. McMillan.

Lamela, D., Figueiredo, B., Bastos, A., & Feinberg, M. (2016). Typologies of post-divorce co-parenting and parental well-being, parenting quality and children’s

psychological adjustment. *Child Psychiatry Human Development*, 47(5), 716-728.
<https://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10578-015-0604-5>

Lavender, J. M., Tull, M. T., Dilillo, D., Messman-Moore, T., & Gratz, K. L. (2015). Development and validation of a state-based measure of emotion dysregulation: The state difficulties in emotion regulation scale (S-DERS). *Assessment*, 8, 1-13.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/10731911155601218>

Lewis, M., Haviland-Jones, J. M., Barrett, L. F. (Eds.). (2008). *Handbook of emotions (3rd ed.)*. The Guilford Press.

Livingstone, K., M., & Srivastava, S. (2012). Up-regulating positive emotions in everyday life: Strategies, individual differences, and associations with positive emotion and well-being. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 46(5), 504-516.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2012.05.009>

Maatta, K. (2011). The throes and relief of divorce. *Journal of Marriage and Divorce*, 52(6), 415-434.
<https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10502556.2011.592425>

Majdandz ĩic ´, M., de Vente, W., Feinberg, M. E., Aktar, E., Bogels, S. M. (2012). Bidirectional associations between co-parenting relations and family member anxiety: A review and conceptual model. *Clinical Child Family Psychology Review*, 15(1), 28–42.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10567-011-0103-6>

Massah, O., Sohrabi, F., A'azami, Y., Doostian, Y., Farhoudian, A., & Daneshmand, R. (2016). Effectiveness of gross model-based emotion regulation strategies training on anger reduction in drug-dependent individuals and its sustainability in follow-up. *International Journal of High Risk Behaviours and Addictions*, 5(1), e24327.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.5812/ijhrba.24327>

Mauss, I.B., Bunge, S. A. & Gross, J. J. (2007). Automatic Emotion Regulation. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 1(1), 146-167.
<http://dx/doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9004.2007.00005.x>

McHale, J. P. (1997). Overt and covert co-parenting processes in the family. *Family Process*, 36(2), 183–201.

<https://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1545-5300.1997.00183.x>

Mendez, L. M., Fefer, S., Loker, T., Wolgemuth, J., & Mann, A. (2015). “Either come together or fall apart”: Co-parenting young children with challenging behaviors. *Couple and Family Psychology: Research and Practice*, 4(2), 74-91.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/cfp0000039>

Metz, S., M., Frank, J., L., Reibel, D., Cantrell, T., Sanders, R. & Broderick, P. C. (2013) The effectiveness of the learning to BREATHE program on adolescent Emotion Regulation. *Research in Human Development*, 10(3), 252-272.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15427609.2013.818488>

Millings, A., Hirst, S., L., Sirois, F. & Houlston, C. (2020). Emotional adaptation to relationship dissolution in parents and non-parents: A new conceptual model and measure. *Plos ONE*, 15(10): E0239712.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0239712>

Molgora, S., Tamanza, G., Ranieri, S. (2014). Divorce and co-parenting: A qualitative study on mediation in Italy. *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage*, 55(4), 200-314.

<https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10502556.2014.901854>

Moore, S., E., Robinson, M., A., & Perry, A. (2011). Social Work students and self-care: A model assignment for teaching. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 47(3).

<http://dx.doi.org/10.5175/JSWE.2011.2010000004>

Mordka, C. (2016). What are emotions? Structure and function of emotions. *Studia Humana*, 5(3), 29-44.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1515/sh-2016-0013>

Morrow, S. L. (2005). Quality and trustworthiness in qualitative research in counselling Psychology. *Journal of Counselling Psychology*, 52(2), 250-260.

<https://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.52.2.250>

Murphy, S. E., Jacobvitz, D. B., & Hazen, N. L. (2016). What’s so bad about competitive co-parenting: Family-level predictors of children’s externalizing

symptoms. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 25(5), 1684–1690.

<https://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10826-015-0321-5>

Naragon-Gainey, K., McMahon, T., & Chacko, T. (2017). The structure of common Emotion Regulation strategies: A meta-analytic examination. *Psychological Bulletin*, 143(4), 384-427. <http://dx.doi.org/doi.org/10.1037/bul0000093>

Nishishiba, M., Jones, M., & Kraner, M. (2014). Comparing means between two groups. In *Research methods and statistics for public and non-profit administrators* (pp. 171-192). SAGE Publications, Inc.

<https://www.doi.org/10.4135/9781544307763>

Novo, M., Farina, F., Seijo, D., Vazquez, M. & Arce, R. (2019). Assessing the effects of an education program on mental health problems in separated parents.

Psicothema, 31(3), 284-291.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.7334/psicothema2018.299>

Nusinovici, S., Olliac, B., Flamant, C., Muller, J., Olivier, M., Rouger, V., Gascoin, G., Basset, H., Bouvard, C., Roze, J, & Hanf, M. (2018). Impact of parental separation or divorce on school performance in preterm children: A population based study. *Plos One*, 13(9)1-11.

<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0202080>

Oehme, K., Ferraro, A. J., Stern, N., Panisch, L., & Greer, M. (2016). Trauma-informed co-parenting: How a shift in compulsory divorce education to reflect new brain development research can promote both parents; and children's best interest. *University of Hawai'i Law Review*, 39(37), 37-73.

<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/648d/a0ccb62209412908e35df274c09c05cf5f28.pdf>

Palmer, C., & Alfano, C. (2017). Sleep and emotion regulation: An organizing, integrative review. *Sleep Medicine Reviews*, 31, 6-16.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2015.12.006>

Pryor, J., & Trinder, L. (2004). Children, families and divorce. In J. Scott, J. Treas, & M. Richards (Eds.), *The Blackwell companion to the sociology of families*. Oxford University Press.

Robson, C. (2011). *Real world research: a resource for users of social research methods in applied settings*, Wiley.

Roque, L., Verissimo, M., Fernandes, M., & Rebelo, A. (2013). Emotion regulation and attachment 's secure base, during different situational and social context in naturalistic settings. *Infant behaviour and Development*, 36(3), 298-306.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.infbeh.2013.03.003>

Rubin, H., J. & Rubin, I., S. (2012). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing*. Sage: London.

Sakka, L. S. & Juslin, P. N. (2018). Emotion regulation with music in depressed and non-depressed individuals: Goals, strategies, and mechanisms. *Music & Science*, 1(1):1-12. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/2059204318755023>

Scheibe, S., Sheppe, G., & Staudinger, U. M. (2015). Distract or reappraise? Age-related differences in emotion-regulation choice. *Emotion*, 15(6), 677-681.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0039246>

Schmidt, I. D., Pfeifer, B. J., & Strunk, D. R. (2019). Putting the cognitive back in cognitive therapy: Sustained cognitive change as a mediator of in session insights and depressive symptom improvement. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 87(5), 446-456.

<https://dx.doi.org/10.1037/ccp000392>

Schramm, D. G., & Becher, E. H. (2020). Common Practices for divorce education. *Family Relations*, 69(3), 543-558.

<https://dx.doi.org/10.1111/fare.12444>

Seidman, I. (2012). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*. Teachers college press.

Sheppes, G., Scheibe, S., Suri, G., Radu, P., Blechert, J., & Gross, J. J. (2014). Emotional Regulation Choice: A conceptual framework and supporting evidence. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 143(1), 163-181.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0030831>

Sheppes, G., Suri, G., & Gross, J. (2015). Emotion regulation in Psychopathology. *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology*, 11, 379–405.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1146/annurev-clinpsy-032814-112739>

Sher, K. J., & Grekin, E. R. (2007). Alcohol and affect regulation. In J. J. Gross (Ed.), *Handbook of emotion regulation* (pp. 560–580). Guilford Press.

Simonic, B. (2017). When the relationship breaks: The role of religion in the process of coping with divorce in focus on the family and education. University in Split, Katolicki bogoslovni fakultet.pp.81-92.

Siracusano, A., Barone, Y., Lisi, G., & Niolu, C. (2015). Parental alienation syndrome or alienating parental relational behaviour disorder: A critical overview. *Journal of Psychopathology*, 21, 231-238.

http://www.jpsychopathol.it/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/03_Art_ORIGINALE_Siracusano1.pdf

Stahl, P. M. (2008). *Parenting After Divorce: Resolving conflicts and meeting your children's needs* (2nd. ed.). Impact Publishers.

Stangor, C. (2011). *Research Methods for the Behavioral Sciences* (4th ed.). Belmont, Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

Starman, A. B. (2013). The case study as a type of qualitative research. *Journal of Contemporary Educational Studies*, 1(13), 28-43. <http://www.sodobna-pedagogika.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Starman1.pdf>

Statistics South Africa: Annual Report, (2019).

http://www.gov.za/files/STATSAnnual_Report_2013-2014.pdf

Steeffel, N. M. (1992). A divorce transition model. *Psychological Reports*, 70(1), 155-160. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2466/PRO.70.1.155-160>

Sun, Y., & Jiang, N. (2021). Grandparents' co-parenting styles in Chinese cities: Living styles and mothers' quality of life. *Asia-Japan Research Academic Bulletin*, 2, 0-31. https://dx.doi.org/10.34389/asiajapanbulletin.2.0_31

Symoens, S., Bastaits, K., Mortelmans, D., & Bracke, P. (2013). Breaking up, breaking hearts: Characteristics of the divorce process and wellbeing after divorce.

Journal of Divorce and Remarriage, 54(3), 177-196.

<https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10502556.2013.773792>

Tamir, M. (2016). Why do people regulate their emotions: A taxonomy of motives in emotion regulation. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 20(3), 199-222.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1088868315586325>

Teubert, D., & Pinquart, M. (2010). The association between co-parenting and child adjustment: a meta-analysis. *Parenting Science and Practice*, 10(4), 286-307.

<https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15295192.2010.492040>

Togliatti, M. M., Lavadera, A. L., & de Benedetto, R. (2011). How couples re-organized themselves following divorce: Adjustment, co-parenting and family alliance. *Life Span and Disability*, 14(1), 55-74.

Van Overland, M. (2016). Emotion regulation can be costly. A study on the effects of emotion regulation strategies on impulsive purchases in consumers. *Innovating Marketing*, 12(1).

[http://10.21511/im.12\(1\)2016.04](http://10.21511/im.12(1)2016.04)

Van Tilburg, T.G., & Aartsen, M. J., & Van der Pas, S. (2015). Loneliness after divorce: A cohort comparison among Dutch young-old adults. *European Sociological Review*, 31(3), 243-252.

<https://dx.doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcu086>

Vilalta, R. Y., & Nodal, W. M. (2017). On the myth of parental alienation syndrome (PAS) and the DSM-5. *Psychologist Papers*, 38(3), 224-231.

<https://doi.org/10.23923/pap.psicol2017.2843>

Viry, G. (2014). Co-parenting and children's adjustment to divorce: The role of geographical distance from fathers. *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage*, 55(7), 503-526.

<https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10502556.2014.950900>

Visser, M., Finkenauer, C., Schoemaker, K., Kluwer, E., van der Rijken, R., van Lawick, J., Bom, H., de Schipper, J. C., & Lamers-Winkelmann, F. (2017). I'll never forgive you: High conflict divorce, social network, and co-parenting conflicts. *Journal*

of *Child and Family Studies*, 26(11), 3055–3066.

<https://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10826-017-0821-6>

Visted, E., Vollestad, J., Nielsen, M., B. & Schanche, E. (2018). Emotion Regulation in current and remitted depression: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 9 (756) 1-20.

<https://dx.doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.00756>

Vohra, V. (2014). Using the multiple case study design to decipher contextual leadership behaviours in Indian organizations. *The Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods*, 12(1), 54-65.

<https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:152017995>

Waller, W. (1938). *The family. A dynamic interpretation*. The Cordon Company Inc. (Republished 1951.Holt, Rinehart & Winston).

Walsh, F. (2011). Family therapy: Systems approaches to practice. In J. Brandell (Editor), *Theory and practice in Clinical Social Work*. (pp.153-178). Sage.

Weiss, R. (1976). *Marital Separation*. Basic Books.

Whitesell, C. J., Teti, D. M., Crobsy, B., & Kim, B. (2015). Household chaos, sociodemographic risk, co-parenting, and parent-infant relations during infants first year. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 29(2), 211-220.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/fam0000063>

Willen, H. (2015). Challenges for divorced parents: regulating negative emotions in post-divorce relationships. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family therapy*, 36(3), 365-370.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/anfz.1115>

Williams, L. E., Bargh, J. A., Nocera, C. C., & Gray, J. R. (2009). The unconscious regulation of emotion: Non conscious reappraisal goals modulate emotional reactivity. *Emotion*, 9(6), 847-854.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/a0017745>

Wilson, C. J., Barnes-Holmes, Y., & Barnes-Holmes, D. (2014). The effect of emotion regulation strategies on physiological and self-report measures of anxiety during a

stress-inducing academic task. *International Journal of Psychology and Psychological Therapy*, 14(1),1-15.

Yin, R. K. (2012). *Applications of Case Study Research (3rd ed.)* Sage.

Zainal, Z. (2007). Case study as a Research Method. *Journal Kemanusiaan*, 9, 1-6.
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/41822817Casestudyasaresearchmethod>

Zaki, J, & W.C. Williams, (2013). Interpersonal emotion regulation. *Emotion*, 13(5), 803-810. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0033839>

Tables and Figures

Table one: Basic participant information

Table 1

Basic participant information

Participant	Gender	Number of children	Language of participant	Number of years divorced	Age	Socio-economic status
Participant 1	Female	1	Afrikaans	12	42	Middle class
Participant 2	Female	2	English & Afrikaans	8	45	Middle class
Participant 3	Female	3	Afrikaans	6	46	Middle class
Participant 4	Female	1	Afrikaans	10	39	Middle class
Participant 5	Male	2	Afrikaans	8	44	Middle class
Participant 6	Male	1	Afrikaans	4	38	High socio-economic status

Table two: Themes identified

Table 2

Themes identified

Themes	Participants						Number of participants who utilised the emotional regulation strategy
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Avoidance		X		X	X	X	4
Conceptual adjustments	X	X	X	X	X	X	6
External behaviours	X	X	X	X	X	X	6

Abstract

Emotional regulation is generally defined as the process in which individuals attempt to control the intensity, duration and expressive behaviour concerning an emotion. It has been suggested that the context in which emotional regulation occurs significantly impacts the individual's ability to successfully regulate emotions. A divorce can have a significant impact on an individual's ability to successfully regulate emotions. Scant literature exists on divorcees' experience of emotional regulation in a co-parenting context. Various factors can influence co-parents' ability to regulate their emotions during co-parenting tasks after a divorce. This study focused on the experience of emotional regulation within divorced co-parents. The researcher aimed to gain insight into these experiences by making use of a qualitative research design which is aimed at gaining in depth, authentic experiences of the participants. A multiple, single case study design was employed. The data was analysed by making use of thematic analysis.

Gross's process model of emotional regulation has been argued to be the leading model in explaining emotional regulation and the different regulatory strategies as it encompasses strategies employed throughout the generative course of emotions. This model was originally presented in 1998 and has been extended to the extended process model. The model is grounded on the modal model of emotions which conceptualises emotions as a four step process. Results and findings were thus discussed at the hand of this model. Results indicated that divorced co-parents makes use of a wide variety of emotional regulation strategies including adaptive and maladaptive strategies. Prominent emotional regulation strategies utilised by participants included; redirection of focus, reappraisal, adaptive behaviours as well as maladaptive behaviours.

Abstrak

Emosionele regulering word oor die algemeen gedefinieer as die proses waar individue probeer om die intensiteit, durasie en uitgedrukte gedrag rondom 'n emosie te beheer. Dit word voorgestel dat die konteks waarbinne emosionele regulering plaasvind 'n betekenisvolle impak het op 'n individue se vaardigheid om emosies suksesvol te reguleer. Literatuur rondom geskeides se ervaring van emosionele regulering binne 'n ko-ouerskap konteks is skaars. Verskeie faktore beïnvloed ko-ouers se vaardigheid om emosies te reguleer gedurende ko-ouerskap take na afloop van 'n egskeiding. Hierdie studie het gefokus op die ervaring van emosionele regulering van geskeides binne 'n ko-ouerskap konteks. Die navorser het gepoog om insig te verkry in hierdie ervaringe, deur gebruik te maak van 'n kwalitatiewe navorsingsontwerp wat poog om in diepte, autentieke ervaringe van die deelnemers te verkry. Daar was gebruik gemaak van 'n veelvoudige, enkele gevalle studie ontwerp. Gross se prosesseringsmodel van emosionele regulering word geag as die vooruitstaande model in die verduideliking van emosionele regulering sowel as die verskeie regulerende strategieë, omrede dit strategieë insluit wat deurlopend is tot die genererende proses van emosies.

Die model was oorspronklik voorgestel in 1998 en is uitgebrei tot die uitgebreide prosesseringsmodel. Die model is geskoei op die modaal model van emosies wat emosies konseptualiseer as 'n vier stap proses. Resultate en bevindinge was dus bespreek op grond van hierdie model. Resultate het getoon dat geskeide ko-ouers gebruik maak van 'n wye verskeidenheid van emosionele regulering strategieë insluitend aanpasbare en nie-aanpasbare strategieë. Prominente emosionele regulering strategieë wat deelnemers van gebruik gemaak het sluit in herleiding van fokus, herwaardering, aanpasbare gedrag sowel as nie-aanpasbare gedrag.

DIVORCEES' EXPERIENCES OF EMOTIONAL REGULATION WITHIN A CO-PARENTING RELATIONSHIP

by

Heske Sangster

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree

Master of Psychology

**In the Faculty of the Humanities
at the University of the Free State**

Bloemfontein

Ethical clearance number:

UFS-HSD2017/0696

RESEARCH STUDY INFORMATION LEAFLET AND CONSENT FORM

DATE:

August 2017

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:

Divorcee's experiences of emotional regulation within a co-parenting relationship,

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR/RESEARCHER(S) NAME(S) AND CONTACT NUMBER(S):

Heske Sangster 2008010660 (Student number) 0605063455 (Contact number)

FACULTY AND DEPARTMENT:

Humanities

Department of Psychology

STUDY LEADER(S) NAME AND CONTACT NUMBER:

Dr Anja Botha

012-4012188

WHAT IS RESEARCH:

Research is something we do to find new knowledge about the way things and people work. We use research projects or studies to help us find out more about how people who have experienced a divorce manage their emotions and how it affects their lives and their children's lives. Research also helps us to find better ways of helping people who struggles with parenting after a divorce. We do this to try and make the world a better place for the people affected by a divorce.

WHAT IS THE AIM/ PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

The aim of this study is to explore and describe the experiences of emotional regulation amongst divorcee's who co-parent.

WHO IS DOING THE RESEARCH?

The researcher, Mrs. Sangster is conducting the research study in order to complete a Research Master's in Psychology at the University of the Free State. She would like to add to knowledge in a field that is of importance to her and South Africa.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICAL APPROVAL?

This study has received approval from the Research Ethics Committee of UFS. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher. Contact Details Of The Secretary Of The Ethical Committee:

Charné Vercueil vercueilcc@ufs.ac.za, 051 4017083

Approval number:

WHY ARE YOU INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT?

If you receive this form, it is likely that you have responded to my advertisement searching for participants. Thank you for displaying interest in the study! Research cannot be conducted without participants; your involvement is therefore of pivotal importance to me. I am attempting to gather at least five males and five females to take part in the study and am selecting you on the following criteria; you must be divorced for at least two years, you must be in a co-parenting relationship, in other words you must be raising a child(ren) with a previous partner, and the child(ren) should not be older than 18 years of age.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

The participant will be interviewed by the researcher and will be requested to answer questions in an informal manner. The researcher will make use of a semi-structured interview which means that a series of questions decided on prior to the interview will be asked in order to make sure that the researcher retrieves the appropriate information relating to the topic. The participant will therefore only be expected to answer questions; no other tests or questionnaires will be used. At least two interviews of 60 minutes each will be conducted with each participant. Questions may include:

“How do you experience parenting conflict between you and your former spouse?”; and “How do you manage your response to conflict situations with your former spouse?”.

CAN THE PARTICIPANT WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY?

Yes, should the participant decide to not take part in the study, he or she may withdraw at any stage. The participation is voluntary and no penalty or loss benefit exists for non-participation. The participant is under no obligation to consent to participation. If you decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

By taking part in this study you will enable the researcher to understand emotional regulation within a co-parenting relationship better so that services to people in similar situations can improve. Although co-parenting is practiced by many, there is little research conducted on it, especially within a South African context. Your participation will therefore be of great importance to improve professionals' knowledge on the topic. Due to your participation you can help other's cope better with co-parenting.

WHAT IS THE ANTICIPATED INCONVENIENCE OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

By taking part in this study, you as the participant will be required to talk about things that might still be uncomfortable to you. Talking about your previous partner and/or current co-parenting relationship may give rise to unwanted emotions. This might be inconvenient for you and should you feel that the interview has caused you emotional turmoil, the researcher will refer you for therapy at FAMSA Pretoria to attend to these feelings. FAMSA Pretoria is located at 218 Lange Street, Brooklyn, Pretoria and can be contacted at 012-4600733/8. FAMSA is a Non-Profit-Organization (NPO) who deliver counseling services to families and individuals at no or limited costs. It is important to remember that research needs to be done on situations such as being in a co-parenting relationship, because of its emotional distress it causes people in order to be able to help people to cope.

WILL WHAT I SAY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

Yes, any details or specific information regarding your situation e.g. your name, your previous partner's name, the names of your children etc. will be kept confidential. The researcher will (with your permission) record the interview in order to be able to return to the information provided by you. However, a process called thematic analysis will be used to analyse the data. This means that your information (and all the other participants' information) will be coded in order to simplify the information, you will be referred to in this way in the data i.e. a code and not a name. Themes will be identified within the data collected, hence the researcher will not make use of any specific information such as names, addresses etc. in the study. The researcher is interested in emotional regulation within the co-parenting relationship, not specific details of the participant. You should however take note that in order to ensure that the research is done properly, the researcher's supervisor and in some instances the members of the Research Ethics Committee may review your answers. Otherwise the only people who will have access to your information are the researcher and supervisor. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

HOW WILL THE INFORMATION BE STORED AND ULTIMATELY DESTROYED?

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet in the researcher's home. For future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. The recorded audio tapes will be deleted together with the hard copies of answers.

WILL I RECEIVE ANY PAYMENT OR INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

Should you be a participant in this study, you will unfortunately not receive any payments or incentives.

HOW WILL THE PARTICIPANT BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS /RESULTS OF THE STUDY?

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Heske Sangster on 0605063455 or email, heske.sangster@menlopark.co.za. The findings are accessible for three months after completion of study. Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Dr Anja Botha at 051-4012188 or bothaa@ufs.ac.za.

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in the study.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I, _____ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in this study. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable). I am aware that the findings of this study will be anonymously processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings.

I agree to the recording of the semi-structured interviews.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

FULL NAME OF THE PARTICIPANT:

SIGNATURE OF THE PARTICIPANT:

DATE:

FULL NAME(S) OF THE RESEARCHER:

SIGNATURE OF THE RESEARCHER:

DATE:

Appendix C: Semi-structured interview questions

Examples of questions during the interview:

(Co-parenting is a term we use to describe the parenting of children between two people who are not married, it can occur between people who have never been married, between a mother and grandmother etc. In this study it refers to people who are divorced, who raise a child or children together, though they do not live together as a couple.)

(Emotional regulation is a term we use to describe the way in which you manage your emotions. There are lots of ways to manage emotions and it can include a way of thinking or behaving or an activity you do. People manage their emotions in order to change from a negative to positive emotion, to decrease a negative feeling such as anger or to maintain or increase a positive emotion.)

1. Establish rapport by asking the participant about their background and children.
2. What do you enjoy most about being a parent?
3. What do you find difficult about being a parent?
4. What are some of the most difficult decisions you have had to make as a parent?
5. What was your experience of the process leading up to your divorce?
6. How do you think the divorce influenced your children?
 - 6.1 What behaviour leads you to say this?/Has the child(ren) said anything?

7. How did you regulate your emotions during the divorce, please provide examples?
8. Has the divorce influenced your parenting, and if so, how? Please provide examples.
9. What is your experience of co-parenting?
10. How do you experience parenting conflict between you and your former spouse (ex husband/wife)?
11. How do you respond to conflict situations with your former spouse (ex husband/wife)?
12. If you disagree with your ex regarding a decision about your child, how do you manage the disagreement?
13. In what way do your feelings towards your ex influence your co-parenting abilities, and how do you deal with these feelings?
14. Do you regulate your emotions regarding your ex and co-parenting different or similar to other areas of your life? Please provide examples.



Digital Receipt

This receipt acknowledges that Turnitin received your paper. Below you will find the receipt information regarding your submission.

The first page of your submissions is displayed below.

Submission Author: Heske Sangster
Assignment Title: Turnitin Practice runs
Submission Title: The experience of emotional regulation within divorced co-p..
File Name: TABLE_OF_CONTENTS.pdf
File Size: 511.64K
Page count: 111
Word count: 27,986
Character Count: 155,940
Submission date: 17-Oct-2021 03:07PM (UTC+0200)
Submission ID: 1673844011

