

**AN ASSESSMENT OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTAL PRACTICES
WHICH PLACE CHILDREN AT-RISK FOR ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

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ABSTRACT

Parental practices play a vital role in children lives. The manner in which parents interact with their children, can promotes and support the physical, emotional, social and intellectual development of a child from infancy to adulthood. It could be describe as the process, whereby children learn to be responsible, and the consequences of their actions with the assistance of their parents. The aim of the study was to assess the perceptions of parental practices, which could place children at risk for abuse and neglect. This study used the quantitative method with a cross-sectional comparative design to examine and compare parental practices of parents, whose children were victims of abuse or neglect across gender, marital status and socio economic status. A sample of 163 participants (87 mothers and 76 fathers), who were either single or married and their socio economic status varied from the lower to the higher income group participated in the study. The participants completed the questionnaire, which was based on the Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI) and the data was analyzed by means of the Statistical Package in the Science (SPSS version 20). The results suggest that there are no significant differences between parents based on socio-economic status and marital status. However, there were significant differences between mothers' and fathers' care and overprotection. Furthermore, mothers were identified as being affectionless controlling in their parenting practices (low care and high overprotection) and fathers as affectionately constraining in their parenting practices (high care and high protection). Recommendations are provided for this study.

DECLARATION

I declare that the current study *assessment of the perceptions of parental practices which place children at-risk for abuse and neglect in the Faculty of Community and Health Science (CHS)* is my own work. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any university, and all the sources I have used have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

Gail Janine Cottee

November 2012

This thesis I dedicate to my loving children:

Corbin Cottee

and

Shannon Cottee

Who believe that their mother is the world's greatest mom. Thank you for making parenthood such a pleasant, lovely and joyful experience. I am really proud to have such well-mannered and kind children like you.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background/ Rationale

Normally when a child becomes a victim of neglect or abuse, the question is often “*Where are the parents?*” Parents should show a genuine interest in their child’s well-being and experiences and should have the capacity for empathy with the child (Reder, et al., 2003:19). If parental behaviour breaches the minimum requirements for appropriate behaviour, the possibility exists that the child could be placed at-risk and thus the safety of the child is threatened (Rickel & Becker, 1998:36). For example, when a child was abused, the child may have been left unsupervised. Similarly, some working parents may have left their children in the care of a person or spouse who abuses substances and therefore the children may then have been abused or neglected.

At-risk situations could have immediate implications, as well as possible future implications, if no intervention takes place. Parenting alone is an inadequate predictor of placing a child at-risk (Reder et al., 2003:91). Parenting is influenced by factors such as marital status of parents, gender of the parent and the child and the socio-economic status of parents (Reder, et. al., 2003). Research done by McLanahan & Sandefur (1994) and Page and Stevens (2002) suggests that single motherhood generally reduces the economic resources available to families. Furthermore, research done by Sigle-Rushton and McLanahan (2004) highlights that children who grow up in fatherless families do worse on measures of scholastic achievement, educational attainment, psychological health,

behavioural problems, delinquency, stable family formation, early sexual debut, partner satisfaction, economic success and physical health.

Becker (1991) argues that single mothers' child care expenses are often greater than if they were married. If a married couple are both working full time, they may choose to specialize so that one parent is primarily responsible for childrearing. Whereas a single mother would not have that resource, a woman may be forced to devote more time to the labour market and less to childrearing than would be the case if she was married (Duncan & Hoffman, 1985). Furthermore, research by Klein & Pellerin (2004) suggests that single-father families gained twice as much economic advantage compared to single-mother families.

The marital status of the mother could also be considered as a risk factor in the parenting practices of parents of children who are victims of abuse and neglect. For example in the Baby Tshemang case (where a nine month old baby was raped) the mother was reported as an irresponsible, unmarried, teenage mother who got drunk and neglected her child's welfare (Richter et al., 2004:46). Research by Quinlan (2003) and Finn (1988) suggests that children who grow up in a household where both or two parental figures are present, tend to spend more time at home and are better supervised than single-parent households. The parent of a single-parent household might be so busy in providing for the household needs, that they lack spending quality time with the children. The demands of work and household responsibilities may be so demanding that the parent may be extremely busy; however, when time is available to improve their interaction and parental bonding with their child or children they are often too tired.

Parents living in low socio-economic environments are more likely to have impaired parent-child relationships and leave children unattended (McWhirter 2004, Van Niekerk 2003). Baharudin (2010) found children who come from families of a higher socio-economic status are more likely to spend more time on homework and extra-curricular activities, and are more likely to plan for future education.

The gender of the parent and the child also plays a role in parenting practices. For example, mothers and fathers differ in their parenting practices (Smetana, Campione, & Metzger, 2006; Youniss & Smollar, 1985). Mothers are more likely to show their children warmth and affection and be more responsive than fathers (Collins & Russell, 1991; Hart, et. al., 1992).

A child who have a close parental bond or attachment with their parents, will approach their parents more freely for advice or guidance than those who have no bond with their parents. Therefore, it is important that parents realize the value of parental interaction and support in their child or children's lives. By improving parental attitudes and child-care practices, a context for healthy growth and development, in which a child can thrive, can be created (Reder, et al., 2003:42). Importantly, when parenting is considered appropriate, the safety of the child is possibly increased, rather than placing a child at-risk (Hofferth, 2000).

At-risk situations could have immediate implications as well as possible future implications, if no intervention takes place. By improving parental attitudes and child care practices, a context for healthy growth and development, in which a child can thrive, can be created (Reder et. al, 2003:42). Importantly, when parenting is considered

appropriate the safety of the child is possibly increased rather than placing a child at-risk (Hofferth, 2000). Research indicates that by adopting a population-level approach to promote more effective parenting and to reduce the risk of child maltreatment (Sanders et al., 2003), whereas programmes could be used to treat parents who have already become involved in the child protection system.

Research has shown that maltreating parents have distorted beliefs and unrealistic expectations regarding the developmental capabilities of children, the age-appropriateness of child behaviours and their own behaviour when interacting with children (Sanders et al., 2003). Furthermore, that these cognitive distortions have been linked to parents attributing hostile intent to their child's behaviour, which could be linked to over-reactive and coercive parenting (Sanders et al., 2003). The purpose of this study was to assess and describe the perceptions of parental practices of parents of children who have been placed at-risk for abuse and neglect. Furthermore, this study seeks to include factors such as gender of the parent and child, marital status and socio-economic status of the parent.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

This study used attachment theory in order to understand how parental bonding plays a role in children's lives. Attachment is described as an emotional bond to another person (Bowlby, 1969). Bowlby (1969: 194) described attachment as a long-lasting psychological connectedness which exists between human beings. He believed that the earliest bonds formed by children with their caregivers have an incredible impact that continues throughout their life. This attachment also serves to keep the infant close to the

mother, thus improving the child's chances of survival. Four different attachment styles have been identified in children: secure, anxious-ambivalent, anxious-avoidant, and disorganized (Bowlby, 1969). Attachment theory suggests that growing children do not break former attachments, but rather learn to become more active within previously established attachments. They add new attachments, which do not necessarily require a break with previous attachments. Children, who have a strong secure bond or attachment with their parents, might explore new relationships and form new bonds with other people, but continue to have a secure bond with their parents. A child's secure bonding will strengthen his or her self-confidence and trust to explore new relationships (Papalia & Olds, 1989:9). Although attachment theory explains the relationship between mother and child, this theory could also explain the relationship between father and child, if attachment is present or absent. In relation to this research study it is important to establish whether parents are aware of the important role that attachment or bonding plays in a child's life, how it affects a child's behaviour or actions and his or her willingness to explore the world. Psychosocial factors such as an unhappy marriage, social adversity such as poverty, poor education or lack of it and the lack of social support may result in an unsatisfactory attachment between parents and their children (Louw & Louw, 2007:131). Negative conditions such as substance abuse take up more of the parents' time, energy and attention and therefore as a result, they do not do not have the time to develop a strong attachment with their child. Emotional unavailability may let a child feel abandoned, sad or worthless (Reder & Lucey, 1995:79). The child may become withdrawn and vulnerable to others with whom the child seeks for a response or a sense of belonging. Furthermore, the bonding that exists between parent and child

describes the relationship which exists between them. If a child had a negative early attachment, it might have a negative impact on future relationships and vice versa (Louw & Louw, 2007:131). Attachment theory thus provides an understanding that when there are challenges in the attachment between parents and their children, their children could be at-risk for neglect and abuse.

1.3 Problem Statement

There is a gap in research done on the perception of parental practices in South Africa (Aqarwal, 2010). Parental practices play an important role in children's lives. Research suggests that marital status, such as single parenting and socio-economic status may place a child at-risk for abuse (Christmas, et al., 1996). There has been a significant increase in single parenting and South Africa has a high number of single parents (Aqarwal, 2010). Reder and Lucey (1995: 7) maintain that although child maltreatment happens across the social strata, social circumstances such as poverty, poor housing and ill-health increase the risk. Many children in South Africa grow up without their fathers. Furthermore, in South Africa, foster parents receive more government funding than single parents, which results in the abandonment of young children, because of the inability of single parents to provide for them (Aqarwal, 2010). These children, who lack care and support, are most at risk of being exploited. The purpose of this study was therefore to assess the parental practices which may place children at-risk for abuse or neglect across factors, such as the gender, marital status and socio-economic status of parents.

1.4 Research Questions

- Which perceptions of parental practices are more likely to place children at-risk for abuse and neglect?
- What are the roles of marital status, socio-economic status and the gender of the parent in the parenting practices of parents of children who have become victims of abuse and neglect?

1.5 Aims and Objectives:

1.5.1 Aims of the study

This study aims to examine and compare the parental practices of parents whose children are victims of abuse and neglect by taking into consideration factors such as gender, marital status and socio-economic status.

1.5.2 Objectives

The objectives of the study were to:

- Describe the perceptions of parental practices of parents whose children are victims of neglect and abuse;
- Compare perceptions of parental practices of parents whose children are victims of neglect and abuse across the variables of gender, marital status and socio-economic status.

1.6 Hypothesis

- Perceptions of parental practices will be significantly different across gender, marital status and socio-economic status.
- Mothers' care and over protection will be significantly different to that of fathers.

1.7 Research Methodology

This research study made use of a cross-sectional comparative research design. A cross-sectional comparative research design allows the researcher to get an indication of the phenomena that are being studied and to make a comparison between them. In this study the cross-sectional comparative research design was used to understand parental practices of parents whose children were victims of abuse and neglect. Factors such as the gender, marital status and socio-economic status of the parents were considered in the study. Merle & Charles (2005) explain that when a cross-sectional design is used, the data collected only shows results for the particular data that was collected, but it cannot show possible changes that might be occurring. According to McMillan & Schumacher (2006) by using the comparative design, the researcher could explore any differences between the two groups (within this study it compared mothers and fathers in terms of care and overprotection, in terms of gender, marital status and socio-economic status) with regards to the phenomena that were studied (parental practices in this study).

1.8 Significance of the Study

This study investigated parental practices across gender, marital status and socio-economic status and how these parental practices could place children at-risk for abuse

and neglect. Due to the fact that there is limited information on parental practices within a South African context, this research study could be quite significant. Practitioners, such as social workers, teachers or community workers could use this research study as a guide to broaden parents' knowledge about how parental practices across gender, marital status and socio-economic status may place their children at risk for abuse or neglect. Due to the fact that the research was conducted in a South African context, it could be used by government institutions, such as the Department of Social Development, for parenting programs in communities to promote better parental practices within these communities and to highlight the plight of children who may be placed at-risk for abuse or neglect due to unsatisfactory parental practices.

1.9 Definition of terms

Parent

A parent is a family member of a child, but it also includes the adoptive parent of a child; however, “ it excludes (a) the biological father of a child conceived through the rape of or incest with the child's mother, (b) any person who is biologically related to a child by reason only of being a gamete donor for purposes of artificial fertilization, and (c) a parent whose parental responsibilities and rights in respect of a child have been terminated” (Children's Act No 38 of 2005).

Parenting

Parenting refers to the rearing of a child and it includes the care, guidance and love displayed by the parent or care giver for the child (Kerby, 2007).

Child

According to the Constitution of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996 a child is a person who is under the age of 18 years (Müller & Hollely, 2009:7).

Gender

It refers to “the attributes, behaviours, personality characteristics, and expectancies associated with a person’s biological sex in a given culture. Gender differences can be based on biology, learning, or a combination of the two.” (Baron & Byrne, 2002:571).

Socio- Economic Status (SES)

It refers to social class or index of SES such as income, amount of education and occupational level. (Wicks-Nelson & Israel, 2002:451).

Attachment Theory

According to the attachment theory fearfulness in children is biologically entrenched in the emotional attachment required for survival, whereby infants have to be close to their parent or caregiver if their physical or emotional needs are to be met (Mash & Wolfe, 2005:208).

1.10 Overview of chapters

This current chapter, chapter 1, is an introduction and refers to the perceptions of parental practices, which place children at risk for abuse and neglect. This chapter also provides the background for the study and includes the problem statements, aims and objectives of the study.

Chapter 2 presents the conceptual framework of the study. This chapter focuses on understanding parenting practices, how these practices potentially place children at risk, what neglect is, and what child abuse is. Furthermore, it discusses attachment theory, parental styles and what effect the marital status, socio-economic status and gender of the parent have on parental practices.

Chapter 3 focuses on the methods used for conducting the research. It includes the aims and objectives of the study, hypothesis, sample characteristics, measuring instruments, data collection, data procedures and ethical considerations.

Chapter 4 provides a graphical analysis of findings as well as a presentation using tables. Descriptive quantitative results are analyzed by means of the Statistical Package in Social Science (SPSS) and these are presented. The statistical presentation reveals the descriptive, correlations and inferential data.

Chapter 5 discusses the results of the study by comparing it with previous studies and parental practices. In this chapter this study's results are interpreted, also an outline of the limitations and recommendations is given.

CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter the literature is about understanding the effect of parental practices. This chapter discusses parental practices, highlighting how these practices potentially place children at-risk. Furthermore, this chapter presents the role of attachment theory, parental practices, how the marital status, socio-economic status and gender of the parent could place children at-risk for abuse and neglect.

2.2 Attachment Theory

Bretherton (1991) states that the attachment theory was introduced by John Bowlby during the late nineteen fifties and early sixties and may also be considered as the joint work by Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth. This theory was further explored by others, such as Mary Main and Peter Fonagy. Attachment theory refers to the ties a child has with his or her caregivers and it seeks to explain the individual differences in the qualities of these attachments (Gullestad, 2001).

Sable (2004) argues that if these relationships are secure, it will encourage self-reliance and confident exploration of the environment. Furthermore, it will promote resiliency in dealing with life's stresses and crises. Whereas the lack of secure relationships can lead to difficulties in regulating emotions and relating to others and this could cause a vulnerability to psychological distress.

Attachment theory focuses on key relationships that provide feelings such as belonging, safety, and security at times of threat or danger. When separation occurs or the possibility of separation from the attachment figure, a child will manifest an agitation and anxiety that Bowlby refers to as protest (Sable, 2004). This anxiety leads to an urgent attempt to search for and restore the connection, which is followed by a sense of despair, during which the hope of reconnection begins to fade. If the disruption is prolonged or repeated, the attachment feelings may result in emotional detachment. If it is not repaired it may persist for an indefinite period (Sable, 2004).

Attachment theory is used to explain parent-child behaviour by professionals involved with child welfare. Furthermore, attachment research was primarily conducted by developmental scientists; however, it has recently been adopted by clinicians (Barth, et al., 2005). Bowlby argued that it was important for mental health that a child should experience a warm, intimate and continuous relationship with his mother or caregiver in which both may find satisfaction or enjoyment (Sable, 2004).

Attachment theory primarily focuses on how children make themselves secure. John Bowlby suggests that children engage in behaviour with the goal of making themselves experience security (Bowlby, 1980). This behaviour includes behaviour such as seeking physical proximity to the caregiver when the child is tired, frightened or ill. When this physical proximity is secured, the child will return to explore the world. This behaviour Bowlby describes as attachment behaviour (Sable, 2004). In seeking this proximity and the responses the child receives from its caregiver, a bond is developed between the caregiver and the child. Therefore, children's development of attachment predicts their future behaviours with others and organizes their response to other people.

2.3 Parental Styles

According to Baumrind (1991) developmental psychologists are interested in how parents impact child development. However, finding the real cause-and-effect which may link specific actions of parents to the later behaviour of their children has proven to be difficult. For example, some children who were raised in diverse environments may grow up to have remarkably similar personalities. On the other hand children who grow up in the same house and who were reared in the same environment may grow up to have different personalities from each other.

Baumrind (1967) maintains that researchers have discovered persuasive relations that exist between parenting styles and the effects these parental styles have on children. In the early 1960's, the psychologist Diana Baumrind conducted a study with preschool-aged children (Baumrind, 1967). By means of naturalistic observation, parental interviews and other research methods, she identified four important dimensions of parenting, namely disciplinary strategies, warmth and nurturance, communication styles and expectations of maturity and control. Baumrind suggests three different parenting styles and further research by (Maccoby & Martin, 1983) also suggests the addition of a fourth parenting style (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Moreover, it is important to note that no one style is correct and that many parents will use overlapping techniques of all parenting styles. The four parenting styles are authoritarian, authoritative, permissive and uninvolved parenting.

2.3.1 Authoritarian Parenting Style

In the authoritarian parenting style, children are expected to follow the strict rules as established by the parents. If they fail to follow these rules, they usually will be punished. The authoritarian parents do not inform their children about the reason for these rules. Baumrind (1991) states when parents are asked to explain the reason for these rules, the parents might simply say "because I said so" and often these children are emotionally abused by their parents. These parents have high demands and are not responsive to their children's needs and expect their children to obey their orders without any explanation.

2.3.2 Authoritative Parenting Style

Just like the authoritarian parenting style, the authoritative parenting style has rules and guidelines which parents expect their children to follow (Baumrind, 1991). However, the authoritative parenting style is much more democratic, whereby the authoritative parents are open to their children and willing to listen to questions. When the children do not meet their parents' expectations, the parents are more forgiving instead of making use of punishment. Baumrind (1991) states that in the authoritative parenting style, parents' disciplinary methods are more supportive than punitive. These parents want their children to be assertive, socially responsible, self-regulated as well as co-operative (Baumrind, 1991).

2.3.3 Permissive Parenting Style

The permissive parenting style, on the other hand, entails that parents make few demands on their children. Children of permissive parents are rarely disciplined, because these

parents have relatively low expectations of maturity and self-control. Baumrind (1991) states that permissive parents are more responsive than they are demanding. Permissive parents are described as being nontraditional, lenient, do not require mature behaviour, allow considerable self-regulation and avoid confrontation. Furthermore, they are seen as being generally nurturing and communicative with their children and are often taking on the role of a friend more than that of a parent.

2.3.4 Uninvolved Parenting Style

According to Maccoby & Martin (1983) the uninvolved parenting style is characterized by few demands, low responsiveness and little communication. Whilst these parents fulfill their child's basic needs, they are generally detached from their child's life. In extreme cases, uninvolved parents may even reject or neglect the needs of their children. If uninvolved parents are directed into a close relationship with their children, they will be reminded of the satisfaction that they deny themselves by relegating child-rearing responsibilities to others (Taylor, 1994).

Research conducted by Baumrind (1991) suggests that parenting styles have an impact on children. Authoritarian parenting styles usually direct children to be more obedient and proficient, but these children rank lower in happiness, social competence and self-esteem. According to Maccoby (1992) adopting an authoritative parenting style is inclined to result in children who are happy, capable and successful. In contrast, permissive parenting often results in children ranking low in happiness and self-regulation. They are more likely to experience problems with authority and tend to perform poorly in school. Furthermore, the uninvolved parenting style has ranked the lowest across all life domains.

These children tend to lack self-control, have low self-esteem and are less competent than their peers.

Maccoby & Martinn (1983) raised the question that if parents know the impact of parenting styles on child development, why do all parents not simply use the authoritative parenting style, seeing that this parenting style is the most likely to produce happy, confident and capable children. Furthermore, they believe that parenting styles might vary due to differences in culture, personality, family size, parental background, socio-economic status, educational level and religion. Also that parenting styles of individual parents may combine to create a unique blend in each and every family. For example, while the mother may show an authoritative style, the father may display a more permissive approach. Maccoby & Martinn (1983) say in order to create a cohesive approach to parenting, it is important that parents learn to work together as they combine various elements of their unique parenting styles.

According to Briere & Elliott (1994) the manner in which a child is treated or maltreated early in their life influences his or her growing self - awareness. In a case of severe child maltreatment (is it early and sustained sexual abuse) it interferes with the child's development of a sense of self. Briere & Elliott (1994) argue that without such an internal base, children may lack the ability to soothe or comfort themselves adequately, which could lead to what appear to be overreactions to stress or painful effects. This injury can also cause difficulties in separating self from others.

2.4 Parenting practices

Moore, et al. (2004) describe parenting as a process that formally begins during pregnancy, but continues throughout the child's life span. Rearing children may seem like a scary experience. Children may think that their parents know all the answers regarding parenthood. However, parents usually don't always know all the answers pertaining to parenthood. Parental practices of being a good or bad parent, often stem from the manner in which parents themselves were reared. Thus, parents often use the knowledge from their own personal upbringing, in rearing their own children. For example, parents may adopt practices used by their parents which they think contributed positively to their own upbringing and implement them as part of their own parental practices.

2.4.1 Factors influencing parenting practices

According to Sanders, et al. (2003:165) parenting is affected by a range of factors which may have an impact on the parents' self-esteem and their sense of well-being. They argue that parents should view parenting as part of a larger context of personal self-care, resourcefulness and well-being and that they should be taught practical parenting skills. Through this the parents then develop coping strategies to managing difficult emotions, including anger, depression, anxiety and high levels of parenting stress (Sanders, et al.,2003).

Dawes, et al. (2006:7) observe that children are more likely to spend time on the street than at home, if there are problems in the family. Some communities manifest and sustain risk environments which place their inhabitants at jeopardy for potential violence and maltreatment by the presence of norms such as the harsh punishment of children, the high

levels of interpersonal violence, high levels of poverty and youth unemployment, high crime levels, the presence of gangs and drug dealing and the availability of few supportive services for families at risk (Dawes, et al., 2006).

According to Leman (2006:261) children are simple and they have simple needs. He argues that children hunger for their parents' love, time and attention. Furthermore, Leman (2006) states that children don't worry much about the physical gifts that parents present to them, but that they rather yearn for their parents' presence. Children benefit when their parents are attentive to their whereabouts, know their friends, monitor the programs they watch on television and maintain contact with their teachers (Stevenson, 1990).

2.5 Marital status and parenting

South Africa's constitution suggests that children have preferential rights over adults, yet this is not reflected in daily reality. In our society children often become victims of child abuse and neglect due to adult behaviour. According to Louw & Louw (2007:134) a warm and gratifying marital relationship does not only promote both parents' attachment towards their children but also seems particularly beneficial to fathers. Hewlett (1992) used the example of the Aka parents in Central-Africa who do more activities together, which increase the father's interaction with their children.

2.5.1 Marriage and Parenthood

Bhana, et al. (2001) argue that marital conflict could spill over to child-parent relationships, whereby parents may use or abuse their children to hurt one another.

Dawes, et al. (2004) maintain that intimate partner violence is also associated with negative parental practices, such as the use of corporal punishment to discipline children. Furthermore, this corporal punishment could escalate into physical abuse. Research by Tajima (2000) has shown that men who abuse their wives are more likely to maltreat their children than those men who do not engage in abusive relationships. Dawes, et al. (2004) and Bhana, et al. (2001) state that abused mothers are violent towards their own children because they are caught up in an abusive relationship.

There may be considerable indirect proof that connects supervision with a child's injury risk. The risk will increase substantially if the child lives with a single caregiver in a home with multiple siblings or with a substance abusing caregiver. Thus, the above mentioned factors hinder the ability of the caregiver to attend to the child closely. For example, in large families, supervision of younger children by older children may be common and is often inadequate. Louw & Louw (2007: 205) state that children at risk for negative outcomes are those who have poor problem-solving skills, poor emotional soothing skills, who are hostile in personality and have poor parental control. Murrin & Martin (2004:45) state that researchers have found that children who spend more unstructured time with their peers and whose behaviour is not monitored by their parents are more likely to abuse drugs or alcohol.

2.5.2 Single and Divorced and Parenthood

Finkelhore (1994:47) argues that one of the things that have contributed to the controversial nature of the problem of sexual abuse is that it has few clear cut risk markers. Whereas in physical abuse, for example, markers in the child's environment

such as single-parenthood, extreme poverty and drug abuse in the family have made the problem easier to identify and target for prevention. However, these markers also give the problem a stereotypical profile. According to Finkelhore (1994:47) the public appears to believe that the perpetrators and their victims also fit a stereotypic profile, even though research has been able to identify reliable risk markers. Additionally, other presumed risk markers, such as low socio-economic status, have received little support from research results (Finkelhore, 1994:47).

Van Niekerk (2003: 13) states that few of the offenders that Childline has dealt with over the years came from families which are intact. These offenders' lives are commonly characterised by disintegration of the family (for example, separation of parents or divorced parents) or households where physical, emotional and/or sexual abuse occurs. In these households, many children lack guidance and control, the opportunity to learn family values and relationship skills such as empathy, as well as the ability to negotiate the fulfillment of needs through relationships. Often father figures or role models are absent, if not physically then emotionally (Van Niekerk, 2003: 13).

Women who divorce abusive partners might be thought to have achieved effective protection for themselves and their children, but these abusive men may apply at courts for an order to increase their visitation rights in order to access and further abuse their children and ironically it is becoming more difficult for women to protect their children in these circumstances. The discovery of child sexual abuse also often may result in the separation or divorce of parents. Furthermore, children are more vulnerable to sexual abuse in the context of separation or divorce, both by their fathers and other men. Furthermore, Sanders, et al., (1998) offer the opinion that children are more comfortable

and therefore able to tell of past abuse when an abusive father has left, because their own safety is no longer jeopardized and their mothers have decreased dependence on and trust in their father.

Sanders, et al. (1998) maintain that improving couples' communication is an important medium to decrease marital conflict over child-rearing issues and the personal distress of the parents and children in conflict relationships. Children will also not disclose abuse due to fear of a threat of physical harm or not wanting to get the perpetrator into trouble, which is often the case when the perpetrator is the child's father or stepfather (Powell,2007:83).

Murrin and Martin (2004: 57) maintain that there is an increased risk of violence associated with non-traditional family structures, for example, single-parent families and step-families. Research has found that one third of physically abused children lived with their biological mother and father, while a similar proportion lived with their step-parent. Furthermore, fathers, stepfathers and father substitutes are twice as likely as natural mothers to be involved in abuse. However, Murrin & Martin (2004: 57) conclude that violence to children can occur in all types of families and all sections of society from the richest to the poorest, and that the majority of single parents and step-parents never abuse their children.

2.6 Socio-economic status and parenting

According to Dawes, et al. (2006:7) poverty is considered as the most important contributing factor to child sexual exploitation, whereby child sex workers can become a means of financial support for impoverished families. However, the data is limited,

although gangs may play an important role in the trafficking and the sexual exploitation of children (Dawes, et al., 2006:7). Dawes, et al. (2006) argue that like many children on the streets, a large proportion of prostituted children are likely to have run away from abusive home circumstances.

Dawes, et al. (2006:7) maintain that in spite of the lack of good evidence, it is claimed that most trafficking in South Africa occurs within its national borders, whereby children from rural areas are perceived as risk groups for being trafficked as a result of chronic poverty, and it has been suggested that Cape Town may be a key destination point. According to Van Niekerk (2003:11) many crimes against children are not reported due to the fact that some families live in poverty and may accept compensation from the perpetrator as an alternative to a criminal charge. Furthermore, due to financial constraints children often may refuse or fail to disclose any abuse or identify the alleged perpetrator.

According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) 2007 report, 150 million girls and 73 million boys under the age of 18 have sex or other physical and sexual violence forced upon them (Research by Southern Hemisphere consulting and development services, 2007:13). These children are forced into commercial sex work due to poverty or abduction, where they are trafficked into brothels or other exploitative environments. They are then subjected to neglect, sexual violence, physical and psychological abuse.

Dawes, et al. (2006:11) state that children often join gangs due to their desire to have access to firearms and protection and also use them as a mode for survival in poverty

stricken communities. Although children of all classes are exposed to abuse and violence, poverty in the home and the community increases the risk of exposure (Garbarino & Kostelny, 1992, 1994, Garbarino, 1995, Pelton, 1994). However, Dawes, et al. (2006) state that one should not generalize, because the majority of people living in difficult circumstances are not perpetrators of child abuse and neglect and often strive to provide the best for their children despite their difficult situations.

Murrin and Martin (2004: 103) argue that children from poorer homes are at greater risk of fatal accidents than children of affluent homes, because they are more likely to be exposed to hazardous environments. They state that some children who are neglected by their parents may be at a greater risk, because they have a low self-esteem and do not care what happens to them. Dawes, et al. (2006:26) state that many children leave their homes to escape unbearable situations at home. This could be due to family conflict, substance abuse, overcrowding and sexual abuse. These children would rather face the considerable dangers of street life than live at home. Additionally, girls living on the streets are at a greater risk for sexual assault.

Van Niekerk (2003: 13) argues that poverty is a contributing factor to the sexual vulnerability of children. She states that many children support their family, pay for their school fees, uniforms and stationary through sexual favours. The increase of the HIV/Aids pandemic and the myths surrounding it also contribute to the vulnerability of children. For example, many children live with other caretakers instead of their biological parents or their older siblings and access to social grants are often unavailable or difficult to obtain. These children are often sexually exploited in exchange for meeting their basic needs. Van Niekerk continues by stating that there is also an increase in gang rape, where

children are targeted by youth gangs, separated from their friends and raped by a number of sexual assailants. Most of these gangs are active in impoverished communities.

Research done by Molo Songololo (2004) states that poverty may lead to the migration of children and their families from rural to urban areas where the lack of skills and employment may place children at risk of sexually exploitative situations (Dawes, et al., 2006:28). Furthermore, some of these children will remain at home and be a source of financial support for these impoverished families. When children are caught up in commercial sexual exploitation it can be difficult for them to leave due to lack of support. Many of these children lack education and skills because their families could not afford school fees or uniforms. When they are removed or left on their own, they would still suffer the psychological effects of sexual exploitation (Molo Songolo, 2005).

Murrin & Martin (2004: 57) maintain that statistics indicated that parents are more likely to harm their children if they are unemployed, have a low income, are younger or have a larger family. Additionally, research has shown that parents who were victims of violence in their childhood have a thirty percent chance of abusing their own children. They view physical violence as a normal way of solving problems or imposing discipline. Bornstein (1998) argued that parents should be empowered to provide children with environments and experiences that optimize children's development; thereby society can prevent after-the-fact remediation. Clark (1990) believes when children from low-income families do things with their parents on weekends, such as have dinner as a family, engage in family hobbies, they could make up for some of the disadvantages of poverty, and their school performance could improve. When there is a consistent emotional bond between parent and child, which is seen through expressions of affection, the child will be more

psychologically equipped to meet the stresses and challenges of life (Kellaghan, et al., 1993).

2.7 Gender of the parent and parenting

Black, et al. (2001) argue that maltreating parents have distorted beliefs and unrealistic expectations regarding the developmental capacities of their children; they might not have an understanding of age appropriate child behaviour and their own behaviour when they are interacting with their children. This could contribute to anger feelings in parents, child behaviour problems and the use of harsh punishment (Slep & O' Leary, 1998). According to Dawes, et al. (2004) studies have indicated that women are more likely to use corporal punishment than men, due to the fact that women often play the main role in child care and that they are more likely than men to discipline children.

Louw & Louw (2007:134) state that when both husband and wife believe that their husbands are able to nurture their infants, the more time the fathers will spend in terms of caring. Horne & Sayger (2000) maintain that the social learning models emphasize how learning takes place within a social environment, whereas one person such as the parent observes, reacts and interacts with other people such as the child. Through this social context children learn ways of behaving as the result of the consequences which follow their behaviour. According to Patterson (1986) this model assumes that dysfunctional child and parent behaviours involuntarily strengthen one another and maintain coercive patterns of family interaction.

According to Louw & Louw (2007: 133) if a mother's life becomes positive, the mother will be able to establish a more positive relationship with her child. However, this secure

attachment may change into an insecure attachment when there is a change in the child's circumstances, for example, divorce or abuse. They argue that in the past, fathers were viewed as substitutes for mothers due to the fact that it was assumed that children spend most of the time with their mothers (Louw & Louw, 2007:134). Fathers may physically care for their children; just as well as mothers. However, in traditional homes mothers take on a nurturing role, whilst fathers would play with their children. Furthermore, the notion of viewing mothers as caregivers and fathers as a playmate has changed; this is due to women's employment in the labour market. Employed mothers tend to become more involved in the playful stimulation of their children, while the fathers contribute more to the caregiving role. Louw & Louw (2007:134) maintain that when fathers are the primary caregivers, they hold on to their highly arousing play style.

Finkelhore (1994: 48) maintains that parents may supervise boys less closely and other potential reporters may be less likely to suspect abuse of males or respond to disclosures made by male victims. Research has shown that boys find it harder than girls to talk to their parents (Murrin & Martin, 2004:86). Furthermore, children of all ages are more comfortable confiding in their mother than their father. Murrin & Martin (2004: 87) continue by saying that children who are good communicators tend to form a stronger bond with their parents and other adults figures in their life. Research has indicated that good communicators are more easily accepted by their peers, do better at school and are less likely to fall into drug or alcohol abuse (Murrin & Martin, 2004: 87).

Risk factors for child abuse are those elements of the child's environment related to parental inadequacy, unavailability, conflict and a poor parent-child relationship in identifying potential risk for the child. Taylor (1994) states that busy professional parents

are sometimes so absorbed by their careers and personal interests, that they are detached from close involvement in their children's lives. Abused children are often children separated from their parents or children whose parents have problems that substantially compromise their ability to supervise or attend to their children (Finkelhor, 1994: 48). Parents' ability to control their anger, when they are alone or when faced with parental stress, has been linked to the increased potential child abuse (Ammerman, 1990, Rodriguez & Green, 1997, Thompson, et al., 1999). Increasing parental self-efficacy to regulate their anger and negative emotion could assist maltreating parents from losing control and harming their children (Stern & Azar, 1998).

Research done in the Western Cape by the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) South African Social Attributes Survey (SASAS) in 2003 indicated that of the women who used a strap, a belt, or a stick to hit their children, 40% admitted doing this to their children who were under the age of three years. This was a cause for concern, because children were being placed at risk of serious injury by the use of disciplinary practice (Dawes, et al., 2006:50).

Louw & Louw (2007) maintain that parents who have a traditional view in terms of gender roles encourage clear gender typical behaviour in their children. Children of these parents also distinguish at an earlier stage between male and female roles. Furthermore, these scholars argue that fathers play an important role in their children's gender-typed behaviour. Fathers are responsible for reinforcing masculine behaviour in their sons and mothers for the feminine behaviour in their daughters. In contrast mothers tend to treat their children similarly (Louw & Louw, 2007:189). According to Louw & Louw (2007:187) research has indicated that children, girls in particular, have less stereotyped

ideas in terms of family roles, careers and toys when their mothers are employed in the labour market.

There are various factors which influence women when they discover their child has been sexually abused. Research suggests that women are somewhat less likely to be supportive when the abuser is their current partner than when he is in any other relationship to them (De Long, 1988, Faller, 1988, Everson, et al., 1989, Sirles and Franke, 1989, Gomes-Schwartz, et al., 1990) and also where the abuser is the child's father (De Jong, 1988, Gomes-Schwartz et al., 1990). According to Sanders, et al. (2001) a survey in Queensland found that 70% of parents with children under the age of 12 years make use of smacking at least occasionally, 3% hit their children with an object rather than their hand and 25% of the parents are in disagreement with their partners over parenting issues. Furthermore, women who had a caring relationship with their children were most likely to be concerned and protective of their children. Women who formerly felt hostile to or overburdened by their children, are likely to be angry and unsupportive towards their children.

Faller (1988) maintains that not all mothers protect their children, which makes the women's role as primary protectors in relation to child abuse problematic for both women and children. Regardless of the mother's response once she knows of the sexual abuse committed by another, the parent-child relationship is often damaged due to the abuse. Furthermore, many children harbour feelings of anger and betrayal toward their mothers, because they might feel that their mothers did not protect them from abuse. For example, girls who are sexually abused by their fathers are often angrier with their mothers than with the abusers. These responses are partly the result of children's

fantasies that their mothers are all-knowing and all powerful, which derives from their early experience of total dependence (Faller, 1988).

Research by Lisak (1991) suggests that it is children's total dependence on women in early childhood which leads later, for boys, to a need to define themselves in opposition to women and that this is reduced by the father's involvement in child rearing. Though it may well be the boy's expectations (or the lack of them) of having a future nurturing role in relation to children themselves which is most significant. Johnson (1988) states that there is convincing evidence that male aggression relating to distancing from women and the objectification of women is fostered in the male peer group rather than in the mother-son relationship.

According to Van Niekerk (2003:13) with the problem of domestic violence, mothers who are victims of domestic violence are often unable to protect their children from sexual assault. Often there is no recognition of either the role mothers may play in protecting children from both physical and sexual abuse by fathers or stepfathers, or the difficulties they face in doing so when they are often victimized by and dependent on these men themselves. These women are expected to protect their children from violent men with little help from state agencies and risk losing their children when they fail.

Parent and child interactions are vital in preparing a child for learning, for example, by means of talking to the child, listening attentively to the child and having daily conversations with the child (Kellaghan, et al., 1993). Clark (1990) claimed children thrive when they operate within the boundaries of the family's settled routine, for example, eating meals at about the same time each day, going to bed at the same time,

etc. Rutter (1990) argued parents should know the importance of affectionate contact with their children, especially at times when the child may be fearful or anxious, for example, when leaving home in the morning and when going to sleep at night.

2.8 Conclusion

When a parent and child develop a stronger and caring relationship, the risk of abuse and neglect could be minimized. The parent will be more aware of where and with whom their child is, and the child might approach the parents more freely, if they experience a problem or crisis. By using positive parenting practices, parents could stimulate their child's social, emotional, language, intellectual and behavioural competencies. Factors such as poor parent management, marital family conflict and parental distress were identified risk factors that could have undesirable developmental outcomes in children. The broader ecological context in which families live, such as poverty and dangerous environment, should also be considered and could be an important contributing factor to child sexual exploitation. Children will become child sex workers as a means of financial support for their family. Gangs in impoverished communities may play a major role in the trafficking and sexual exploitation of children. Parents could reduce their children's risk environment by focusing on key aspects such as neglect, conflict, disruption and negative behaviour and attitudes. If parents display and encourage positive behaviour, their children will view them as positive role models. By enhancing positive parental practices, parents could provide a warm, safe, nurturing home environment for children and that would help them develop into individuals who respect, love and trust each other. The following chapter will discuss the methodological approach used for this study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the methods and procedures used for this study. A quantitative methodological approach was used to assess the parental practices of parents, whose children were victims of abuse and neglect. This chapter focuses on the sample, the research instrument, the data collection process, analysis of the study and ethical considerations.

3.2 Methodology

Babbie and Mouton (2001) define research methodology as techniques and procedures used in the process of implementing the research design and its underlying assumptions. This study made use of a quantitative approach and design to test the hypothesis and relationship between the variables.

3.3 Research Design

This study made use of a cross-sectional comparative research design. A cross-sectional comparative research design allows the researcher to get an indication of the phenomena that are being studied and to make a comparison between them. Merle & Charles (2005) explain that when a cross-sectional design is used, the data collected only shows results for the particular data that was collected, but it cannot show possible changes that might be occurring. According to McMillan & Schumacher (2006) by using the comparative

design, the researcher could explore any differences between the two groups (within this study it compared mothers and fathers in terms of care and overprotection, in terms of gender, marital status and socio-economic status) with regards to the phenomena that were studied (parental practices in this study).

3.4 Population and sample

Hinton (2004) defines a population as a complex set of individuals that a researcher wishes to study. The population for this study is parents of children who were victims of abuse and neglect, who received counselling to deal with their trauma they had experienced. The researcher obtained permission from the district surgeon, who is the head the Thuthuzela Centre, the directors of Safeline and Lifeline\Child to conduct research at the institutions. The parents, who accompanied their children for counselling, were asked to take part in this research study by means of completing the self-administrative questionnaires. The final sample consisted of 163 questionnaires completed by parents, whose children were victims of abuse or neglect. The final sample consisted of parents, whose children received counseling at a Thuthuzela Centre, Safeline and Lifeline\Childline. As this is a very sensitive study, only parents who were willing to participate participated in the study. The final sample was therefore a self-selected sample of participants. These parents lived in the Northern Suburbs of Cape Town and surrounding areas. They normally accompanied their children, when they came for counselling at the above mentioned institutions. The majority of the children were accompanied by their mothers. After permission was obtained from the head of the institutions, the parents were asked to complete the questionnaires.

The final sample consisted of 163 participants with the majority being female (53.4%), married (60.8%), Coloured (58.3%) and having higher socio-economic status (52.8%). The mean age for the group was 35.68 ($SD = 8.62$). The mean age of the child victim was 8.49 ($SD = 4.12$) and female (75.5%).

3.5 Research Instrument

The researcher drafted a questionnaire to collect the data for this study. The researcher made use of the Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI) developed by (Parker, Tupling & Brown, 1979) to construct the questionnaire.

In the first section the parents provided their demographic information by means of their age, gender, race, employment and income. In the second section the participants completed their child's age, gender and schooling.

The third section of the questionnaire consisted of 25 questions which look at how the parents socialize with their children. It includes questions such as "*Mothers/Fathers are emotionally cold to their children*", "*Mothers/Fathers appear to understand their children's problems and worries*", "*Mothers/Fathers are affectionate to their children*" and "*Mothers/Fathers like to allow their children to make their own decisions*".

The participants answered the questions by indicating their response as "always", "most of the time", "some of the time" or "never". The responses of the questionnaire are based on a 4- point Likert scale. Babbie and Mouton (2009:644) defined a Likert scale as a type of composite measure which was developed by Rensis Likert in an attempt to improve the levels of measurement in social research, by making use of standardized response

categories in survey questionnaires. The 4-point Likert scale ranged from 1. = always, 2. = most of the time, 3. = some of the time and 4. = never. This Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI) has been found to be reliable and valid (Parker, et al., 1983). The overall Cronbach Alpha for reliability testing in the current study was .64 for mothers and .60 for fathers.

3.6 Pilot Study and Results

Vogt (2007:109) states the importance of a pilot study when researchers conduct research. The pilot study was conducted with 30 participants at the Thuthuzela Centre. A pilot study was done to test the data collection, instrument and reliability of the study. After the researcher obtained permission from the district surgeon, who is the head of the institution, the researcher started with the data collection process at the above mentioned institution.

The sister on duty was contacted, to enquire whether there were any children with their parents in the waiting room, waiting for medical examinations. Before the data collection the participants were informed of the aims and objectives of the study. The parents were then asked to complete the questionnaire in the language of their choice. The questionnaire could have been completed in English, Afrikaans or Xhosa.

Participants were informed about research ethics such as voluntary participation, informed consent, privacy, anonymity and confidentiality. Participants were asked to complete the consent form, before completing the questionnaire. The questionnaire was completed by means of self-administered questionnaires by the parents. Assistance was

provided if they needed to clarify any questions pertaining to the questionnaire. Completion of the questionnaire was between 10 to 20 minutes.

The majority of the children were accompanied by their mothers. If the mothers were married or involved in a relationship, the researcher would ask them to ask their spouses or partners to complete the questionnaire and return it to the researcher. The fathers who were present completed the questionnaire at the institution.

3.6.1 Results of the pilot study

The researcher made use of the Statistical Package in the Social Sciences (SPSS) to process the data collected. The data collected was coded, entered and analysed using the Statistical Package in the Social Sciences (SPSS). The SPSS offers information in terms of percentages, frequencies, mean and standard deviations and correlations, which describe the characteristics of the sample, to determine the significance of the nature of relationships and to test the hypotheses.

3.6.2 Changes to the instrument

The following changes were made to the instrument. Please see revised questionnaire after the pilot study was conducted. (See Appendix B). After conducting the pilot study the participant's name question was removed from the questionnaire, because it is a quantitative study and it was not necessary for data capturing. When conducting the pilot study, two participants declined to complete the questionnaire. This could be due to the fact that the questionnaire required them to place their name on the questionnaire. These participants might have been scared of being labeled as unfit or bad parents due to the

sensitive nature of the topic. Participants were informed that their privacy, anonymity and confidentiality would be ensured in the study and during analysis of the data. Instead of using the participant's name a number was used.

The section of the biographical data required was placed in brackets. A participant then only had to tick in the block applicable to him or her. Each question was coded, which made it easier for data capturing. After conducting the pilot study the researcher realized the importance of a question which addresses the fact about who cares for the child during the day or when the parent is working. This would indicate whether the child received proper supervision during the day or in the absence of the parent. Not all parents are fortunate enough to take care of their children on a full time basis. If they have to work to make a financial contribution to the families, do they see to it that their children receive proper supervision or, due to economic hardship, ask siblings or family members to assist in supervision of the child?

The collection of data was time consuming, because the researcher is employed full time and research was conducted after hours or when the researcher was on leave. Therefore, the researcher contacted other agencies such as Lifeline and Safeline to secure participants for a constant flow of participants.

3.6.3 Application of the instrument

The questionnaire focused on parents whose children had been victims of abuse and neglect across gender, marital status and socio-economic status. Parents who brought their children for medical examinations and counselling at a Thuthuzela Centre were asked to complete the questionnaire. It took between 10 to 20 minutes to complete the

questionnaire. In general the participants gave good co-operation. However, there were two parents who declined to complete the questionnaire. The reason could be that on the pilot study questionnaire the name of parents was asked and they might have been scared to be labeled as being unfit parents.

3.7 Data collection of the main study

The pilot study was done at the Thuthuzela Centre, after permission was obtained from the district surgeon, who is the head of the institution. The pilot study was conducted by means of self-administered questionnaires by the parents of children who were examined and received counselling at the above mentioned institution. After the pilot study, the researcher made the necessary changes in research process and instrument for the main study. The main study followed after the completion of the pilot study analysis and results. The main study was done at the Thuthuzela Centre, Safeline and Lifeline\Childline. The 163 parents at the above mentioned institutions completed the self-administered questionnaires for the main study.

3.8 Data Analyses

Describing and examining data is an important preliminary step before doing the real analyses, whereby the researcher needs to explore the data collected (Vogt, 2007: 62). By means of the exploratory data analysis, the researcher could examine the shape of the distributions. When studying the frequency distribution, the researcher can see whether the shape of the distribution is normal or not (Vogt, 2007: 62). Vogt (2007: 62) states “when it is normal, measures of central tendencies make excellent summaries of facts about the distributions”. The Statistical Package in the Social Sciences (SPSS) V20 data

was used to analyze the data. The raw data was entered into the SPSS, coded and cleaned, whilst checking for errors as it was entered. The statistical analysis incorporated descriptive statistics, as well as inferential statistics. The descriptive statistics provided describing the data by means of frequencies, mean and standard deviations. A Univariate Analysis of Variables (ANOVA) was used to determine significant differences between groups (Vogt, 2007: 22). According to Vogt (2007) the average or mean of the sum of the squares is crucial in the analysis of variance or ANOVA. Furthermore, ANOVA is appropriate when more than two means are being compared. It is used for a simple test between means, where the groups are independent of one another (Salkind, 2008:378). This study did not utilize the Post Hoc Tests for effect sizes, because it only compared two groups namely mothers and fathers for this study (Olenjnik, et al., 1997: 389).

The parenting practices identified with the The Parental Bonding Instrument (Parker, Tupling & Brown, 1979) was parental care and over protection. Based on the high and low scores, responses for care and over protection are assigned to one of four quadrants identifying four types of parents: (1)“affectionate constraint” parenting = high care and high protection (2) “affectionless control” parenting = high protection and low care (3) “optimal parenting” parenting = high care and low protection (4) “neglectful” parenting = low care and low protection. For mothers, a care score of 27.0 and a protection score of 13.5 are cut-off points. For fathers, a care score of 24.0 and a protection score of 12.5 are cut-off points. If participants score above these scores, they would score high scores and similarly for low scores.

Parental Bonding Quadrants	
<p>“affectionate constraint”</p> <p>= high care and high protection</p>	<p>“affectionless control”</p> <p>= high protection and low care</p>
<p>“optimal parenting”</p> <p>= high care and low protection</p>	<p>“neglectful parenting”</p> <p>= low care and low protection</p>

The category gender was created by collapsing it in either male or female (see Appendix B). Category marital status was created by collapsing it in single, married, divorced, widowed and living together (see Appendix B). Category socio-economic status was created by creating two groups into low (less than R 1000, R 1000 – R 2000) and high (R 3000 – R 4000, R 5000 – R6000 and above R 6000) (see Appendix B). The participants were asked to tick in the appropriate block next to the question.

3.9 Ethical Statement

When a researcher does social scientific research it important that he or she should be aware of what is viewed as proper or improper when doing research (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:520). The researcher must not reveal information that might embarrass, humiliate or endanger the life of the participant. When conducting the pilot study the researcher ensured the participants’ confidentiality and anonymity. During the pilot study the following ethical considerations were adhered to:

No harm to participants: The researcher ensured that no participant was injured during the conduct of the research, despite the fact that they voluntarily formed part of the researched study.

Voluntary information: The researcher informed the participants that they may voluntarily form part of the research. Participants were made aware of the fact that they had the right to refuse any participation in the research and could withdraw from the research process at any point.

Privacy, anonymity and confidentiality: The researcher protected the participants' identity by using codes in the data analysis rather than their names. The researcher informed the participants that their identity was protected and the information which they shared would be treated as confidential. By using coding in the data analysis, the researcher ensures that the participants' privacy and identities were protected.

Informed consent: The researcher informed the participants of the process and purpose of the study. Written consent was obtained from participants. Participants were asked to complete a consent form indicating their voluntary participation in the pilot study.

The consent form indicated the purpose of the study, the contact details of the researcher and the supervisor. The researcher also allowed the participants the opportunity to clarify any questions with the researcher. If participants required further intervention in any way, the researcher would refer them for the necessary counselling.

3.10 Conclusion

This research study made use of a quantitative methodological design. The aim of this study is to understand parental practices of parents whose children were victims of abuse and neglect. Factors such as gender, marital status and socio-economic status of the parents were considered in the study. A descriptive research design was used for this study. This chapter includes information regarding the sample, the research instrument, the data collection process and the analysis of the study. The research ethics used during the data collection, for example, no harm to participants, voluntary information, privacy, anonymity and confidentiality and informed consent. This chapter also includes changes made to the instrument for the main study. The results of this study are presented and explored in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

The results obtained from the analysis of the study are presented in this chapter. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) V20 was used to analyse the data that was gathered for this study. Appendix C presents the codes that were used when coding the data to be entered into SPSS in preparation for the analysis of the data. Some tables were moved into appendices, because they were too long.

4.2 Analysis Overview

The hypotheses for this study were:

- Perceptions of parental practices will be significantly different across gender, marital status and socio economic status.
- Controlling parenting places children at less risk for abuse or neglect.
- Uninvolved parents place children at risk for abuse or neglect.
- Lack of parental perceptions of child vulnerability places children at risk.

4.3 Internal consistency of Instrument

The instrument used in the study was the Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI) questionnaire (Parker, Tupling & Brown, 1979). The PBI measures the parental interaction of mothers and fathers with their children. Research done by Parker, et al.

(1979 - 1998) indicates a reliability .86 for the PBI care scale and 0.85 for the PBI overprotection scale. The questionnaires has 25-item instruments scored on a 4 point Likert-type scale ranging from 1= very unlike to 4= very like. In this study the Cronbach Alpha coefficients for the PBI for mothers was .64 and for fathers .60. The instrument used was considered to be reliable.

4.4 Description of the sample

Table 4.1 (see Appendix D) provides an overview of the demographic information of the 163 participants that was gathered for this study. The demographic information consisted of the type of dwelling/ house the participants live in, their monthly income per household after deductions, their race, employment and language.

The results, in Table 4.1, show that the majority of the parents lived in their own house [55(33.7%)]. The monthly income after deductions, of the majority of the participants earned less than R 1000 [(45(27.6 %))] per month. The majority [95(58.3%)] of the participants identified themselves as coloured. The majority of the parents were married [86(52.8%)]. The majority of the parents were employed [101(62%)] and [10(6.1%)] were self-employed. The results suggest that the language distribution was somewhat evenly distributed with [57(35%)] Afrikaans speaking participants, [52(31.9%)] English speaking participants and [54(33.1%)] Xhosa speaking participants.

Table 4.2 (see Appendix E) presents the results for the gender, schooling and care of the children of the participants during the day.

The results in table 4.2 shows that [123(75.5%)] of the sample for children were females and [40(24.5%)] were male. The majority of the children were attending primary school [88(54%)], [27(16.6 %)] were attending high school and [28(17.2%)] of the children were at preschool. Some of the children were not attending school [20(12.3%)].

The results suggest that the majority of the children [60(36.8%)] were cared for by family members, while the parents were at work. Some children were cared for by a nanny or a domestic worker [6(3.7%)]. The rest of the children was taken off by the parents themselves [54(33.1%)], a day care or crèche [33(20.2%)] and only (10(6.1%)] by a spouse or partner.

4.5 Perceived care and overprotection: Gender, marital status and socio economic status groups

This section presents perceived parenting practices focusing on care and overprotection in terms of gender (mothers and fathers), marital status (single and married) and socio-economic status (lower en higher income groups).

4.5.1 Perceived care in relation to gender

Table 4.3: Care and gender of parent

Perceived Parenting Practices Care Items	Mothers		Fathers	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Speak in warm and friendly tone to their children	1.7	.71	1.8	.79
Appear to understand their children's problems and worries	1.5	.84	2.2	.86
Are affectionate to their children	1.3	.68	1.9	.89
Enjoy talking over things with their children	1.3	.64	2.0	.88
Frequently smile at their children	1.2	.48	1.9	.84
Make their children feel better when they are upset	1.4	.91	2.0	.93
Do not help their children as much as they need	2.5	1.1	2.5	.88
Are emotionally cold to their children	1.6	1.0	2.4	1.0
Often do not understand what their children need or want	2.2	1.0	2.6	.95
Make their children feel as if they are not wanted	1.3	.71	2.3	1.0
Do not talk very much with their children	2.1	1.1	2.5	.94
Do not praise their children	2.2	1.2	2.3	1.0

Table 4.3 shows the perception of care in terms of gender of the parent. For mothers, the highest mean score was for the item *mothers do not help their children as much as they need* ($M=2.5$; $SD=1.1$) and the lowest was for *mothers do not frequently smile at their children* ($M=1.2$; $SD=.48$). For fathers, the highest mean score was for the item *fathers often do not understand what their children need or want* ($M=2.6$; $SD=.95$) and the

lowest was for *fathers often do not speak in a warm and friendly tone to their children* ($M=1.8$; $SD=.79$).

4.5.2 Perceived overprotection and gender

Table 4.4: Perceived overprotection and gender of parent

Perceived Parenting Practices Items	Mothers		Fathers	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Do not allow their children to do the things they like to do	2.3	.98	2.5	.91
Like to allow their children to make their own decisions	2.0	.90	2.5	.98
Allow their children to decide things for themselves	2.2	.96	2.2	.81
Tend to give their children as much freedom as she or he wants	2.3	1.0	2.6	.91
Do not allow their children to go out as often as they want	2.3	.89	2.4	.86
Do not allow their children to dress as they please	2.3	1.0	2.2	.98
Do not want their children to grow up	2.7	1.0	2.5	.91
Try to control everything their children do	2.3	.90	2.3	1.1
Invade their children's privacy	2.5	1.0	2.4	.94
Tend to think of their children as babies	2.0	1.0	2.1	.97
Try to make their children feel dependent on them	2.4	1.0	2.5	1.0
Let their children feel that they could not look after themselves when mothers/fathers are not around	3.1	1.0	2.5	.93
Are overprotective of their children	1.4	.74	2.0	.96

Table 4.4 shows the perception of overprotection in terms of gender of the parent. For mothers, the highest mean score was for the item *mothers let their children feel that they could not look after themselves when their fathers were not around* ($M=3.1$; $SD=1.0$). For fathers, the highest mean score was for the item *fathers tend to give their children as much freedom as they want* ($M=2.6$; $SD=.91$). The lowest mean scores for both mother

($M=1.4$; $SD=.74$) and father ($M=2.1$; $SD=.97$) was for the item *mothers/fathers are overprotective of their children*.

4.5.3 Perceived care according to marital status

Table 4.5: Single parents' perception of care

Perceived Parenting Practices Items	<i>i</i>	Mothers		Fathers	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Speak in warm and friendly tone to their children		1.8	.83	1.9	.89
Appear to understand their children's problems and worries		1.6	.85	2.4	.79
Are affectionate to their children		1.5	.80	1.7	.84
Enjoy talking over things with their children		1.5	.77	1.9	.96
Frequently smile at their children		1.3	.56	1.5	.61
Make their children feel better when they are upset		1.5	1.0	1.8	.95
Do not help their children as much as they need		2.5	1.1	2.5	.79
Are emotionally cold to their children		1.8	1.0	2.6	.93
Often do not understand what their children need or want		2.2	1.0	2.8	1.0
Make their children feel as if they are not wanted		1.4	.74	2.9	1.2
Do not talk very much with their children		1.2	1.0	2.7	.83
Do not praise their children		2.1	1.1	2.4	1.0

Table 4.5 shows care according to marital status (single). For mothers the highest mean score was for item *mothers do not help their children as much as they need* ($M=2.5$; $SD=1.1$) and the lowest was for *mothers do not frequently smile at their children* ($M=1.3$; $SD=.56$). For fathers the highest mean score was for the item *fathers make their children*

feel as if they are not wanted ($M=2.9$; $SD=1.2$) and the lowest was for single fathers *fathers do not frequently smile at their children* ($M=1.5$; $SD=.61$).

Table 4.6: Married parents' perception of care

Perceived Parenting Practices Items	Mothers		Fathers	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Speak in warm and friendly tone to their children	1.6	.52	1.7	.76
Appear to understand their children's problems and worries	1.5	.84	2.9	.88
Are affectionate to their children	1.1	.44	1.9	.90
Enjoy talking over things with their children	1.2	.40	2.0	.87
Frequently smile at their children	1.1	.33	2.0	.87
Make their children feel better when they are upset	1.2	.75	2.0	.93
Do not help their children as much as they need	2.5	1.1	2.5	.91
Are emotionally cold to their children	1.3	.92	2.6	.93
Often do not understand what their children need or want	2.3	1.0	2.6	.92
Make their children feel as if they are not wanted	1.2	.65	2.1	.99
Do not talk very much with their children	2.1	1.3	2.4	.97
Do not praise their children	2.4	1.3	2.3	1.0

Table 4.6 shows care in terms of married parents. For mothers the highest mean score was for item *mothers tend not help their children as much as they need* ($M=2.5$; $SD=1.1$) and the lowest was for *mothers do not frequently smile at their children* ($M=1.3$; $SD=.33$). For fathers the highest mean score was for the item *fathers understand their*

children's problems and worries ($M=2.9$; $SD=.88$) and the lowest was for fathers speak in a warm and friendly tone to their children ($M=1.7$; $SD=.76$).

4.5.4 Perceived overprotection according to marital status

Table 4.7: Single parents' perception of overprotection

Perceived Parenting Practices Items	Mothers		Fathers	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Do not allow their children to do the things as they like to do	2.3	1.0	2.2	.90
Like to allow their children to make their own decisions	2.0	1.0	2.7	1.0
Allow their children to decide things for themselves	1.9	.99	2.6	.93
Tend to give their children as much freedom as they want	2.4	.99	2.6	.93
Do not allow their children to go out as often as they want	2.2	.83	2.2	.98
Do not allow their children to dress as they please	2.1	1.0	2.7	1.1
Do not want their children to grow up	2.7	1.0	2.7	.92
Try to control everything their children do	2.2	.86	2.3	.86
Invade their children's privacy	2.3	1.0	2.2	1.1
Tend to think of their children as babies	2.1	1.0	2.0	1.0
Try to make their children feel dependent on them	2.6	1.0	2.6	.93
Let their children feel that they could not look after themselves when fathers/mothers are not around	3.0	1.1	2.3	.99
Are overprotective of their children	1.5	.80	2.4	.87

Table 4.7 shows overprotection in terms of marital status (single). For mothers the highest mean score was for item *mothers make their children feel that they cannot look after themselves when fathers are not around* ($M=3.0$; $SD=1.1$) and the lowest was for

mothers are overprotective of their children ($M=1.5$; $SD=.80$). For fathers the highest mean score was for the item *fathers like to allow their children to make their own decisions* ($M=2.7$; $SD=1.0$) and the lowest was for *fathers tend to think of their children as babies* ($M=2.0$; $SD=1.0$).

Table 4.8: Married parents' perception of overprotection

Perceived Parenting Practices Items	Mothers		Fathers	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Do not allow their children to do the things as they like to do	2.2	.86	2.6	.90
Like to allow their children to make their own decisions	2.0	.78	2.4	.95
Allow their children to decide things for themselves	2.1	.92	2.1	.74
Tend to give their children as much freedom as they want	2.1	1.0	2.6	.92
Do not allow their children to go out as often as they want	2.5	.93	2.4	.83
Do not allow their children to dress as they please	2.4	1.0	2.1	.90
Do not want their children to grow up	2.7	1.0	2.5	.91
Try to control everything they children do	2.5	.93	2.3	1.1
Invade their children's privacy	2.7	1.0	2.4	.89
Tend to think of their children as babies	2.0	1.0	2.1	.97
Try to make their children feel dependent on them	2.3	1.0	2.4	1.0
Let their children feel that they could not look after themselves when their fathers/mothers are not around	3.3	.94	2.5	.91
Are overprotective of their children	1.3	.66	1.9	.97

Table 4.8 presents results of overprotection according to marital status (married). For mothers the highest mean score was for item *mothers let their children feel that they could not look after themselves when fathers are not around* ($M=3.3$; $SD=.94$) and the lowest was for *mothers are overprotective of their children* ($M=2.5$; $SD=.91$). For fathers the highest mean score was for the item *let their children feel that they could not look*

after themselves when fathers are not around ($M=2.7$; $SD=1.0$) and the lowest was for fathers are overprotective of their children ($M=1.9$; $SD=.97$).

4.5.5 Perceived care according to socio economic status

Table 4.9: Lower income groups ' perception of care

Perceived Parenting Practices Items	Mothers		Fathers	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Speak in warm and friendly tone to their children	1.7	.77	2.0	.93
Appear to understand their children's problems and worries	1.6	.89	2.1	.96
Are affectionate to their children	1.4	.75	1.8	1.0
Enjoy talking over things with their children	1.3	.65	1.9	.83
Frequently smile at their children	1.3	.54	1.5	.75
Make their children feel better when they are upset	1.5	1.0	1.9	1.0
Do not help their children as much as they need	2.5	1.1	2.6	1.0
Are emotionally cold to their children	1.8	1.0	2.4	1.1
Often do not understand what their children need or want	2.3	1.1	2.6	1.0
Make their children feel as if they are not wanted	1.3	.75	2.0	1.1
Do not talk very much with their children	2.3	1.1	2.4	.94
Do not praise their children	2.2	1.2	2.2	1.0

Table 4.9 shows results of care in terms of socio-economic status (lower income group).

For mothers the highest mean score was for the item *mothers do not help their children as much as they need* ($M=2.5$; $SD=1.1$) and the lowest item was for *mothers frequently smile at their children* ($M=1.3$; $SD=.54$). For fathers, the highest mean score was for the

item *fathers do not help their children as much as they need* ($M=2.6$; $SD=1.0$) and the lowest was for *fathers do not help their children as much as they need* ($M=1.5$; $SD=.75$) for fathers.

Table 4.10: Higher income groups ' perception of care

Perceived Parenting Practices Items	Mothers		Fathers	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Speak in warm and friendly tone to their children	1.8	.60	1.7	.70
Appear to understand their children's problems and worries	1.5	.77	2.2	.80
Are affectionate to their children	1.2	.56	1.9	.81
Enjoy talking over things with their children	1.4	.64	2.1	.87
Frequently smile at their children	1.1	.37	2.1	.83
Make their children feel better when they are upset	1.3	.71	2.0	.89
Do not help their children as much as they need	2.5	1.1	2.5	.78
Are emotionally cold to their children	1.3	.86	2.4	1.0
Often do not understand what their children need or want	2.2	.95	2.6	.91
Make their children feel as if they are not wanted	1.2	.65	2.5	1.0
Do not talk very much with their children	1.8	1.0	2.5	.95
Do not praise their children	2.1	1.3	2.4	1.0

Table 4.10 shows the results of care in terms of socio-economic status (higher income). For mothers the highest mean score was for the item *mothers do not help their children as much as they need* ($M=2.5$; $SD=1.1$) and the lowest item was for *mothers frequently smile at their children* ($M=1.1$; $SD= .37$). For fathers, the highest mean score was for the

item *fathers often do not understand what their children need or want* ($M=2.6$; $SD=.91$) and the lowest was for *fathers speak in a warm and friendly tone with their children* ($M=1.7$; $SD=.70$).

4.5.6 Perceived overprotection according to socio economic status

Table 4.11: Lower income groups ' perception of overprotection

Perceived Parenting Practices Items	Mothers		Fathers	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Do not allow their children to do the things as they like to do	2.4	(1.0)	2.3	(.89)
Like to allow their children to make their own decisions	1.9	1.0	2.3	1.0
Allow their children to decide things for themselves	2.0	1.0	2.3	1.0
Tend to give their children as much freedom as they want	2.4	1.0	2.3	.93
Do not allow their children to go out as often as they want	2.3	.97	2.4	.98
Do not allow their children to dress as they please	2.4	1.0	2.4	1.0
Do not want their children to grow up	2.6	1.1	3.1	.71
Try to control everything their children do	2.3	1.0	2.1	.92
Invade their children's privacy	2.4	1.1	2.4	1.1
Tend to think of their children as babies	2.2	1.1	1.6	.89
Try to make their children feel dependent on them	2.6	1.1	2.9	.82
Let their children feel that they could not look after themselves when fathers\mothers are not around	3.0	1.1	2.5	.94
Are overprotective of their children	1.3	.62	1.9	.95

Table 4.11 shows results of overprotection of parents, in terms of the socio-economic status (lower income group). For mothers the highest mean score was for the item *mothers let their children feel that they could not look after themselves when their fathers are not around* ($M=3.0$; $SD=1.1$) and the lowest item was for *mothers are overprotective*

of their children ($M=1.3$; $SD=.62$). For fathers, the highest mean score was for the item *fathers do not want their children to grow up* ($M=3.1$; $SD=.71$) and the lowest was for *fathers tend to think of their children as babies* ($M=1.6$; $SD=.89$).

Table 4.12: Higher income groups ' perception of overprotection

Perceived Parenting Practices Items	Mothers		Fathers	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Do not allow their children to do the things as they like to do	2.1	.81	2.6	.91
Like to allow their children to make their own decisions	2.0	.73	2.5	.94
Allow children to decide things for themselves	2.0	.84	2.1	.69
Tend to give their children as much freedom as they want	2.1	.94	2.8	.88
Do not allow their children to go out as often as they want	2.4	.76	2.4	.81
Do not allow their children to dress as they please	2.1	.97	2.1	.94
Do not want their children to grow up	2.9	.96	2.3	.89
Try to control everything their children do	2.4	.73	2.4	1.1
Invade their children's privacy	2.5	.93	2.4	.86
Tend to think of their children as babies	1.8	.97	2.4	.92
Try to make their children feel dependent on them	2.2	.88	2.2	1.0
Let their children feel that they cannot look after themselves when \mothers are not around	3.3	1.0	2.5	.93
Are overprotective of their children	1.6	.86	2.1	.97

Table 4.12 shows the results of overprotection in terms of socio-economic status (higher income group). For mothers the highest mean score was for the item *mothers let their*

children feel that they could not look after themselves when their fathers are not around ($M=3.3$; $SD=1.1$) and the lowest item was for *mothers are overprotective of their children* ($M=1.6$; $SD=.86$). For fathers, the highest mean score was for the item *fathers do not allow their children to do the things as they like do* ($M=2.6$; $SD=.91$) and the lowest was for *fathers are overprotective of their children* ($M=2.1$; $SD=.97$).

4.6 Total scores for perceptions of parental care and overprotection

The Parental Bonding Instrument measures two subscales, parental care and overprotection of children. A minimum of 12 and a maximum of 48 could be scored.

The following is a guide to abbreviations used in the analysis of the data:

Abbreviation	Term
PBI	Parental Bonding Instrument
MC	Mother Care
FC	Father Care
MOP	Mother Over Protection
FOP	Father Over Protection

Table 4.13 shows the means (*M*) and standard deviations (*SD*) of mothers' and fathers' care and overprotection of their children.

Table 4.13: Means (*M*) and Standard Deviations (*SD*) of perceptions of care and overprotections

Variables	n	Minimum	Maximum	M	SD
FC	76	14.00	35.00	27.0	4.4
FOP	76	24.00	42.00	31.3	3.4
MC	87	13.00	31.00	21.0	4.6
MOP	87	19.00	44.00	30.2	4.1

Minimum score = 12

Maximum score = 48

For mothers, a care score of 27.0 and a protection score of 13.5

For fathers, a care score of 24.0 and a protection score of 12.5

Table 4.13 presents the total mean scores for mothers and fathers in terms of care and overprotection. Mothers scored below the cutoff point for care ($M=21$, $SD= 4.6$) and above the cutoff point for overprotection ($M=30.2$, $SD=4.1$). For fathers, care was above the cutoff point ($M=27$, $SD= 4.4$), while fathers scored above the cutoff point for overprotection ($M=31.3$, $SD=3.4$).

According to the Parental bonding quadrant, the scores suggest that mothers have affectionless controlling parenting practices (low care and high overprotection) and

fathers are affectionately constraining in their parenting practices (high care and high protection) (see data analysis section in Chapter 3).

4.7 Comparison of groups

The purpose of this section is to compare parents' care and overprotection in terms of their gender, marital and socio economic status. This was done with a Univariate Analysis of Variables (ANOVA) in order to test the hypotheses.

Gender

Table 4.14: Parental care and overprotection of mothers and fathers

	Mothers	Fathers	<i>Df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Care	20.98	26.83	1	136.86	.00
Overprotection	30.21	31.33	1	7.00	.01

The results in Table 4.14 shows significant differences between care and overprotection of mothers and fathers. The results suggest that mothers's care ($F(1, 162) = 136.86, p < 0.00$) is significantly less than fathers' care ($F(1, 162) = 7.00, p < 0.01$). Mothers's overprotection ($F(1, 162) = 136.86, p < 0.00$) is significantly less than fathers' overprotection ($F(1, 162) = 7.00, p < 0.01$).

Marital Status

Table 4.15: Group differences for marital status

		MS	n	M	SD	df	F	p
Mothers	MC	Single	47	21.77	4.51	1	3.14	.08
		Married	40	20.05	4.50			
	MOP	Single	47	29.85	3.34	1	.75	.39
		Married	40	30.63	4.96			
Fathers	FC	Single	17	27.53	4.82	1	.53	.47
		Married	59	26.63	4.39			
	FOP	Single	17	32.12	2.91	1	1.17	.28
		Married	59	31.11	3.54			

Table 4.15 suggests that marital status did not have a significant effect on parenting practices of mothers and fathers.

Socio Economic Status

Table 4.16: Group differences for socio-economi status

		SES	n	M	SD	df	F	P
Mothers	MC	Low	51	21.75	4.82	1	3.60	.06
		High	36	19.89	3.98			
	MOP	Low	51	30.31	4.28	1	.08	.78
		High	36	30.06	4.04			
Fathers	FC	Low	26	25.69	4.54	1	2.61	.11
		High	50	27.42	4.36			
	FOP	Low	26	31.23	3.15	1	.03	.86
		High	50	31.38	3.57			

The results in Table 4.16 that socio-economic status did not have a significant main effect on the parenting practices of mothers and fathers.

Conclusion

This study compared the perceptions of parental practices will be significantly different across gender, marital status and socio-economic status. The results of study suggest that parental practices do not significantly differ across marital and socio-economic status. However, there is a significant difference for gender . Results in this study suggests that mothers' care is significantly lower than fathers' care. The results were similar for overprotection.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This study aims to examine and compare parental practices across gender, marital status and socio-economic status. This chapter presents a discussion on the findings of the study. The findings are examined in relation to the aims and hypotheses of the thesis, integrating the theoretical framework discussed in Chapter 2. This chapter compares perceptions of parental practices of parents whose children are victims of neglect and abuse across gender, marital status and socio-economic status. It begins with a representation of parental practices, by using the hypotheses which follow to frame the discussion. Finally, the limitations of the study are discussed and recommendations are presented.

5.2 Understanding parental practices

Baumrind (1967) identifies three different parenting styles that parents could display, namely, authoritarian, authoritative and permissive. However, Maccoby & Martin (1983) identified uninvolved parenting as a fourth parenting style. If a parent makes use of an authoritarian parenting style, children are obliged to listen to their parents' demands, without any explanation (Baumrind, 1991). If parents make use of an authoritative parenting style, parents are open to listen to any concerns their children might have about their parental expectations. However, if parents make use of a permissive parenting style,

they are more lenient towards their children, whilst uninvolved parenting entails that parents are not actively involved in their child's life.

In terms of overprotection the highest mean score for mothers was for the item *mothers let their children feel that they could not look after themselves when their fathers were not around*. This finding is similar to Maccoby's (1992) study in terms of an authoritative parenting style. Children of authoritative parents are inclined to be happy, capable and successful. However, in contrast, the highest mean score for fathers overprotection was for the item *fathers tend to give their children as much freedom as they want*. This parenting practice is similar to permissive parenting. According to Maccoby (1992), permissive parenting often results in children ranking low in happiness and self-regulation. They are more likely to experience problems with authority and tend to perform poorly in school.

Parenting is a process that formally begins during pregnancy, but it continues throughout the child's life span (Moore, et al., 2004). Parenting can be described as a 24 hour job, whereby children are dependent on parents for survival. It is the task of parents to guide their children through childhood. During this time children first make sense of and understand objects in the world, form social bonds, and learn how to express and read basic human emotions. Furthermore, these developmental dynamics are closely tracked by parents, who shape them and in turn are shaped by them.

The attachment theory as theoretical approach for the study. Attachment theory refers to the ties a child has with his or her caregiver and it seeks to explain the individual differences in the qualities of these attachments (Gullestad, 2001). Parents directly

influence a child's development, both by the beliefs they hold and by the behaviours they display.

Sanders, et al. (2003:165) argue that parenting is affected by a range of factors which have an impact on the parents' self-esteem and their sense of well-being. Parents should be empowered to provide children with environments and experiences that optimize children's development; thereby society can prevent after-the-fact remediation (Bornstein, 1998).

Parenting beliefs include perceptions about, attitudes toward, and knowledge of all aspects of parenting and childhood. Parents in different cultures or subcultures hold different understandings about the meaning and significance of their parenting beliefs and behaviours, as well as the development of their children (Moore, et al., 2004).

5.3 Gender differences in parental practices

Hypothesis one which suggested that the perceptions of parental practices will be significantly different across gender was proven. Hypothesis 2 which suggested that mothers care and overprotection will be significantly different to that of fathers was also proven. The results of this study suggests significant differences between maternal and parental care and overprotection. Mothers scored significantly lower than fathers for both care and overprotection. In terms of care the highest mean score for mothers was for the item *mothers do not help their children as much as they need*. This finding is similar to the research conducted by Black, et al. (2001) that argued that maltreating parents have distorted beliefs and unrealistic expectations regarding the developmental capacities of

their children. Furthermore, they might not have an understanding of age appropriate child behaviour and their own behaviour when they are interacting with their children. This could contribute to anger feelings in parents, child behaviour problems and the use of harsh punishment (Slep & O' Leary, 1998). According to Dawes, et al. (2004) studies have indicated that women are more likely to use corporal punishment than men, due to the fact that women often play the main role in child care and that they are more likely than men to discipline children. Contrary to this when mothers discipline their children, the children may view this punishment as a sign that their mothers do not care about them. The mother may not be equipped with parenting skills that steer clear of harsh punishment and rather make use of other less harsh punishment tools to discipline the child. However, the results of this study suggests that mothers and fathers also differed in terms of overprotection, with fathers scoring significantly higher than mothers. It could be argued that if parents have reasonable beliefs and realistic expectations regarding the developmental capacities of their children, it could enhance the parent-child relationship. These results are similar to research conducted by Kellaghan et al. (1993) who argued that when there is a consistent emotional bond between parent and child, which is seen through expressions of affection, the child will be more psychologically equipped to meet the stresses and challenges of life.

5.3.1 Maternal parental practices

The majority of the participants in this study were female (75.5%). Results in this study suggests that in terms of care, mothers do not help their children as much as they need to. Contrary to this, research found that parent and child interactions are vital in preparing a child for learning, for example, by means of talking to the child, listening attentively to

the child and having daily conversations with the child (Kellaghan, et al, 1993). Sable (2004) argues that if a parent and child attachment is secure, it will encourage self-reliance and the confident exploration of the environment.

This study suggests that in terms of overprotection mothers scores are significantly lower than those of fathers. The highest mean score for mothers overprotection was for the item *mothers let their children feel that they could not look after themselves when their fathers were not around*. However, contrary to this research by Lisak (1991) found that it is children's total dependence on women in early childhood which leads later, for boys, to a need to define themselves in opposition to women and that this is reduced by the father's involvement in child rearing.

Furthermore, according to the sample means mothers have a low care score but a high overprotection score which corresponded to the affectionless control quadrant. Louw and Louw (2007:134) argues a warm and gratifying marital relationship does not only promote both parents' attachment towards their children but also seems particularly beneficial to fathers. Hewlett (1992) used the example of the Aka parents in Central-Africa who do more activities together, which increase the father's interaction with their children. However, the majority of the mothers in this study were single(47%) and may not experience a warm and rewarding relationship with their childrens' fathers and may receive inadequate support from family members and community resouces. They may so caught up in providing for their childrens daily basic needs, that there may be a lack in mother and child interaction. This may not be by choice, but rather by circumstances. The majority of the mothers in this study were in the low income group and this placed an extra burden on them to provide for their childrens' needs. Whereas, the majority of the

fathers were in the high income group and they had the security that that they could provide in their childrens needs.

5.3.2 Paternal parental practices

Fathers accounted for 24.5% of the sample. The results in this study suggest that fathers often do not understand what their children need or want. This result is different to research that found that children are simple and they have simple needs, and that children are hungry for their parents' love, time and attention (Leman, 2006). Additionally, children appreciate their parents' presence. Parents' expressions of affections should be included with verbal activities and it is essential for a secure parent/child relationship to manifest (Leman, 2006).

This study suggests that in terms of overprotection fathers score significantly higher than mothers. The highest mean score for fathers overprotection was for the item *fathers tend to give their children as much freedom as they want*. However, this findings are contrary to research conducted by Louw & Louw, (2007) who found that South African children who are at risk for negative outcomes, are those who have poor problem-solving skills, poor emotional skills, who are hostile in personality and have poor parental control. However, research conducted by Taylor (1994) stated that if uninvolved parents are directed into a close relationship with their children, they will be reminded of the satisfaction that they deny themselves by relegating child-rearing responsibilities to others.

Furthermore, according to the sample means fathers have a high care score and a high protection score which corresponded to the affectionate constraint quadrant. Louw &

Louw (2007) argue that when both husband and wife believe that their husbands are able to nurture their infants, the more time the fathers will spend in terms of caring. The majority of the fathers in this study was married and were in the high income group. They may receive adequate support from their spouses to care for their children and provide for their daily needs. This place less strain on them, to fulfill their role as parent towards their children and to show more care and overprotection towards their children. Leman (2006) argues that children don't worry much about the physical gifts from parents, but that they rather desire for their parents' presence. Stevenson (1990) believes children benefit when their parents are attentive to their whereabouts, know their friends, monitor the programs they watch on television and maintain contact with their teachers.

5.4 Marital status differences in parenting practices

5.4.1 Single parental practices

Society at large has witnessed a notable rise in single-parent headed households, divorced and blended families, and teenage moms and dads. The majority of the mothers in this study were single (47%). Hypothesis one which suggested that the perceptions of parental practices will be significantly different across marital status was not proven. The results suggests no significant differences between single and married parents. This study suggests that in terms of care, single mothers do not help their children as much as they need. Murrin & Martin (2004:54) argue that there is an increased risk of violence associated with non-traditional family structures, for example, single-parent families and step families, due to stress, coping issues and bonding problems. However, research has

also found that one third of physically abused children lived with their biological parent, whilst a similar proportion lived with their step-parent (Murrin & Martin, 2004:54).

In terms of overprotection single mothers let their children feel that they cannot look after themselves when their fathers are not around. The likelihood of parental supervision is possible, because these children may be more dependent on their mother, and their mother will be more aware of who they are socialising with and where. Contrary to this, this study suggests that in terms of overprotection, single fathers in turn like to allow their children to make their own decisions. The results of this study can be compared to the uninvolved parenting style which is characterized by few demands, low responsiveness and little communication. These parents may fulfil their child's basic needs but are generally detached from their child's life (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). These children are more at risk for abuse and neglect, due to lack of parental supervision.

5.4.2 Married parental practices

The majority of the fathers in this study were married (59%). Louw and Louw (2007:134) argue that a warm and gratifying marital relationship does not only promote both parents' attachment towards their children, but also benefits fathers, because it increases the fathers' interaction with their children. These children will be reared in a warm, caring and protective environment. This supports research that suggests children thrive when they operate within the boundaries of the family's settled routine, for example, eating meals at about the same time each day, going to bed at the same time, etc. This family routine will promote a productive and healthy environment for the children's lives and

will provide opportunities for the parent and child to interact with one another (Clark, 1990).

The research suggests that married mothers, in terms of care, tend not to help their children as much as they need. Contrary to mothers, fathers appear to understand their children's problems and worries. This findings is similar to research done by Bowlby who argues that it is important for mental health that a child should experience a warm, intimate and continuous relationship with the caregiver in which both may get satisfaction or enjoyment (Sable, 2004).

In terms of overprotection married mothers let their children feel that they cannot look after themselves when their fathers are not around. Similarly research by Sable (2004) argues if children experience a lack of security with their parents, it could lead to difficulties in regulating emotions and relating to others, which could cause a vulnerability to psychological distress. Therefore, parents should develop a secure bond with their children, which in return will enhance their children's sense of belonging and safety. Parents should know the importance of affectionate contact with their children, especially at times when the child may be fearful or anxious, for example, when leaving home in the morning and when going to sleep at night (Rutter, 1990).

This study also suggests that in terms of overprotection, married fathers do not allow their children to do the things they like to do. This supports research that found that children who spend more unstructured time with their peers and whose behaviour is not monitored by their parents are more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol (Murrin & Martin,

2004). Consequently parental supervision should be promoted in children's lives, because it could reduce the risk of abuse and neglect.

No significant differences were found between the groups.

5.4 Socio-economic status differences in parenting practices

5.4.1 Low income group

Hypothesis one which suggested that the perceptions of parental practices will be significantly different across socio-economic status was not proven. The results of this study suggest that in terms of care, mothers of the lower income group do not help their children as much as they need. Whilst fathers of the lower income group tend not to help their children as much as they need and do not understand what their children need or want. The results of this study differ from a study that has found that when children from low-income families do things with their parents on weekends, such as have dinner as a family, engage in family hobbies, they could make up for some of the disadvantages of poverty, and their school performance could improve (Clark,1990). When there is a consistent emotional bond between parent and child, which is seen through expressions of affection, the child will be more psychologically equipped to meet the stresses and challenges of life (Kellaghan, et al., 1993).

In terms of overprotection, mothers of the lower income group let their children feel that they cannot look after themselves when their fathers are not around. Fathers of the lower income group do not want their children to grow up. Research has found that some families who live in poverty are so severely pressed by the demands of life, that they

often possess limited parenting skills, lack social contact and might have limited access to good child-rearing practices (Taylor, 1994). By engaging the above mentioned parents in a non-threatening, positive and supportive social context their parental abilities could be enhanced.

5.4.1 High income group

Murrin and Martin (2004:57) argue that violence towards children occurs in all types of families and all sections of society, from the richest to the poorest, and also that a majority of single parents and step-parents never abuse their children. This study suggests that mothers of the higher income group in terms of care also do not help their children as much as they need, whilst fathers often do not understand what their children need or want. The results of this study can be compared with a previous study that states that busy professional parents are sometimes so absorbed by their careers and personal interests, that they are detached from close involvement in their children's lives (Taylor, 1994).

In terms of overprotection, mothers of the higher income group also let their children feel that they cannot look after themselves when their fathers are not around. This corroborates research that found that children benefit when their parents are attentive to their whereabouts, know their friends, monitor the programs they watch on television and maintain contact with their teachers (Stevenson, 1990). Contrary to mothers, in terms of overprotection, fathers of the higher income group tend to give their children as much freedom as they want. It is therefore important that parents should always know where their children are, what they are doing and who they are with.

On a daily basis all over the world, people are experiencing the joys, heartaches, challenges and rewards of becoming a parent. Children learn from their parents and parents must realize the importance their parental practices have on their child's life. Parents directly influence their children through their own beliefs and the behaviour they display.

Parents should be aware that if they have a secure bond with their children, these children will be eager to explore the world. If the bond of parent and child is not secure, the child may experience anxiety and insecurity, which will result in the child being hesitant to explore the new challenges that life has to offer.

No significant differences were found between the groups.

5.5 Limitations of the study

1. Limitations pertaining to the participants' racial groupings were evident within this study. Whilst all racial groups were represented within this study, the research found that the majority of the participants were black and coloured and that the minority was white. This means that the results cannot be generalised to all ethnic groups in South Africa.
2. The participants who partook in this study are not necessarily the biological parent/s of the child. Some of the participants were either in a cohabitate relationship, with one of the parents, a foster parent or a stepmother or father.
3. The majority of the participants in this study were female. Although this gender difference was not of a large proportion, it may have affected the findings.
4. Only parents who accompanied their children for therapy was selected for this study, no other voluntary parents were considered.

5.6 Conclusion

This study examined and compared parental practices of parents whose children are victims of abuse and neglect across gender, marital status and socio-economic status. The results of this study should be interpreted with caution. Findings suggest that parental practices and parental attachment could affect parental interaction and bonding between parent and child. If the child and parent interaction and bond is close and parents are actively involved in their children's lives the chances of them being a victim of abuse and neglect could be reduced. If parents' knowledge of their roles and influence could be highlighted, it could prevent unpleasant outcomes for their children's life. Although there is limited research on parental practices from a South African context, the findings of this study suggest more awareness into the assessment of parental practices that may place children at risk for abuse and neglect.

5.7 Recommendations

There is a saying 'once a parent, always a parent'. It is obvious to say that parental interaction plays a vital role in a child's life, whether it is to the child's personal development or to society's long-term investment in children. Parents are vital in the survival, socialization, and education of young children and a child's upbringing also has an influence on his or her adulthood. Parents should realize the importance of parental practices and parental skills and how these could be used to improve the lives of children. In light of the results of the study the following are recommended:

- Enhance parent and child relationships by building the child's confidence, which will in turn improve the child's social skills.

- Parents need to develop stronger bonds or relationships with their children by spending more time with them or regularly communicating with their children, so they could be aware of any developments in the child's life.
- Parental involvement must be age appropriate, whereby a parent will monitor a toddler more closely than they would a teenager.
- Parents must stay involved in their children's lives, so they remain or become closer to their children.
- More research on parental practices from a South African context is needed, so that literature could be made available for any local research being conducted, as currently literature from other continents is being used to accommodate South African phenomena.
- Future research should compare parental practices of only biological parents and how it differs and influences children's lives.
- Future research should seek to ensure a sufficient representation of all the racial groupings with Southern Africa.

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Appendix A



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CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project: Assessment of the perceptions of parental practices which place children at-risk for abuse and neglect.

The study has been described to me in language that I understand and I freely and voluntarily agree to participate. My questions about the study have been answered. I understand that my identity will not be disclosed and that I may withdraw from the study without giving a reason at any time and this will not negatively affect me in any way. I understand that the information is private and will be managed by the interviewer, confidentially and anonymously. I understand that I give consent that the information gathered by the questionnaire will be anonymously presented in research reports and publication articles.

This letter was signed onday ofmonth of the year.....

Signature of interviewee:

Appendix B

QUESTIONNAIRE

Research Topic: Assessment of the perceptions of parental practices which place children `

Section A (Demographic Information)

Please complete the necessary information and **make a tick to the appropriate block next to the question.**

A1. Age of parent

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A2. Gender of parent

1. Male	2. Female
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A3. Type of dwelling or house

1. Own home	2. Rented home	3. With friends	4. With family	5. Other for example shack
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A4. Monthly income per household after deductions

1. Less than R1000	2. R1000 – R 2000	3. R 3000 – R 4000	4. R 5000 – R 6000	5. Above R 6000
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A5. Race

1. White	2. Black	3. Coloured	4. Indian	5. Other
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A6. Marital Status

1. Single	2. Married	3. Divorced	4. Widowed	5. Living together
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A7. Employment

1. Unemployed	2. Employed	3. Self employed
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A8. Language

1. English	2. Afrikaans	3. Xhosa
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Section B (Children's Information)

Please **make a tick** next to the children's age which was a victim or survivor of abuse or neglect.

B1. Age of the child

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B2. Gender of child

1. Male	2. Female
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B3. Schooling

1. Not at school	2. Preschool	3. Primary school	4. High school
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B4. Who cares for the child during the day or if you are at work

1. Self	2. Family	3. Daycare/creche	4. Spouse/partner	5. Nanny/maid
---------	-----------	-------------------	-------------------	---------------

Section C (Parental Interaction)

MOTHER FORM

This questionnaire lists various attitudes or behaviours of parents. As a Mother, please tick to the most appropriate box next to the question.

Mother's Form	1. Always	2. Most of the time	3. Some of the time	4. Never
1. Mothers speak in a warm and friendly tone to their children.				
2. Mothers do not help their children as much as they need.				
3. Mothers do not allow their children to do the things as they like to do.				
4. Mothers are emotionally cold to their children.				
5. Mothers appear to understand their children's problems and worries.				

6. Mothers are affectionate to their children.				
7. Mothers like to allow their children to make their own decisions.				
8. Mothers do not want their children to grow up.				
9. Mothers try to control everything their children do.				
10. Mothers invade their children's privacy.				
11. Mothers enjoy talking over things with their children.				
12. Mothers frequently smile at their children.				
13. Mothers tend to think of their children as babies.				
14. Mothers often do not understand what their children need or want.				
15. Mothers allow their children to decide things for themselves.				
16. Mothers make their children feel as if they are not wanted.				
17. Mothers make their children feel better when they are upset.				
18. Mothers do not talk very much with their children.				
19. Mothers try to make their children feel dependent on them.				
20. Mothers let their children feel that they could not look after themselves when fathers are not around.				
21. Mothers tend to give their children as				

much freedom as she or he wants.				
22. Mothers do not allow their children to go out as often as they want.				
23. Mothers are overprotective of their children.				
24. Mothers do not praise their children.				
25. Mothers do not allow their children to dress as they please.				

FATHER FORM

This questionnaire lists various attitudes or behaviours of parents. As a Father, please tick to the most appropriate box next to the question.

Father's Form	1.Always	2. Most of the time	3. Some of the time	4.Never
1. Fathers speak in a warm and friendly tone to their children.				
2. Fathers do not help their children as much as they need.				
3. Fathers do not allow their children to do the things as they like to do.				
4. Fathers are emotionally cold to the children.				
5. Fathers appear to understand their children's problems and worries.				
6. Fathers are affectionate to their children.				
7. Fathers like to allow their children to make their own decisions.				
8. Fathers do not want their children to grow				

up.				
9. Fathers try to control everything their children do.				
10. Fathers invade their children's privacy.				
11. Fathers enjoy talking over things with their children.				
12. Fathers frequently smile at their children.				
13. Fathers tend to think of their children as babies.				
14. Fathers often do not understand what their children need or want.				
15. Fathers allow their children to decide things for themselves.				
16. Fathers make their children feel as if they are not wanted.				
17. Fathers make their children feel better when they are upset.				
18. Fathers do not talk very much with their children.				
19. Fathers try to make their children feel dependent on them.				
20. Fathers let their children feel that they could not look after themselves when mothers is not around.				
21. Fathers tend to give their children as much freedom as they want.				
22. Fathers do not allow their children to go out as often as they want.				

Appendix C

The following is a guide to abbreviations used in the analysis of the data:

Abbreviation	Term
PBI	Parental Bonding Instrument
MC	Mother Care
FC	Father Care
MOP	Mother Over Protection
FOP	Father Over Protection

Appendix D

Table 4.1: Demographic Information of the Parents

Variables	Total Sample	n =163	(%)
Type of dwelling			
Own home		55	(33.7%)
Rented home		39	(23.9%)
With friends		8	(4.9%)
With family		47	(28.8%)
Other		14	(8.6)
Monthly Income			
Less than R1000		45	(27.6%)
R1000 – R2000		32	(19.6%)
R3000-R4000		31	(19.0%)
R5000- R6000		40	(24.5%)
Above R6000		15	(9.2%)
Race			
White		10	(6.1%)
Black		58	(35.6%)
Coloured		95	(58.3%)
Marital status			
Single		42	(25.8%)
Married		86	(52.8%)
Divorced		15	(9.2%)
Widowed		7	(4.3%)
Living together		13	(8.0%)

Employment		
Unemployed	52	(31.9%)
Employed	101	(62.0%)
Self employed	10	(6.1%)
Language		
English	52	(31.9%)
Afrikaans	57	(35.0%)
Xhosa	54	(33.1%)

Appendix E

Table 4.2 Gender, schooling and care of children

Variables	Total sample	n=167	(%)
Gender			
Female		123	75.5%
Male		40	24.5%
Schooling			
Not at school		20	12.3%
Pre-school		28	17.2%
Primary school		88	54.0%
High School		27	16.6%
Care of children			
Self		54	33.1%
Family		60	36.8%
Day care / creche		33	20.2%
Spouse/ partner		10	6.1%
Nanny / maid		6	3.7%