Exploring The Impact of Child Rearing Practices on Young Children's Holistic Development in Chivi District, Zimbabwe

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Abstract
Child rearing practices have consistently been shown to have an influence on children's growth and development. Building on many researches done on how families bring up their children and with reference to Bronfrenbrenner's Ecological Theory; the present study explored the impact of child rearing practices on young children's holistic development in Chivi District of Zimbabwe. Qualitative methods were used to collect data from a sample of fourteen (14) early childhood development (ECD) parents, three (3) caregivers and thirty-six (36) ECD B children. Results indicated that most children in Chivi District come from nuclear families that are authoritarian, authoritative or neglectful. The data collected also revealed that in Chivi district, raising children in extended families is no longer a common practice as it used to be in the past. A lot of factors were found to contribute to this extended family disintegration. It was also found out that authoritarian and neglectful parenting styles impacted on young children's total development as well as caregivers' use of both positive and negative techniques in handling children's behaviours.
Key Words:Child rearing practices, parenting styles, behaviour, young children, nuclear family

Abbreviations
CRC: Convention on the Rights of Children
CCL: Canadian Council on Learning
UNESCO: United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WHO: World Health Organisation
NAEYC: National Association for the Education of Young Children

A young child's experience in the first six years of life has a critical bearing on later development. The first three years are especially important because research shows that this is the period when the developing brain is particularly sensitive to the effects of nutritional deficits and effects of positive stimulation or stimulus deprivation (Alderman and Engel, 2008). Thus, young children need enabling and supportive environments which are rich with good nutrition and warm sensitive human interactions from care givers. Children also need opportunities for stimulation and learning if they are to thrive and benefit from the opportunities provided in early childhood settings.

Child Rearing Practices and Young Children's Holistic Development
A child's home background, how the child lives, what he eats and how the child interacts or is regarded by people around him all form part of his early life. Many attributes affect the care rendered to children and subsequently impact on their development. For example, when a caregiver is unwell or depressed, his or her capacity to care for young children suffers, thus negatively impacting on the child's development. There are scenarios where parents or caregivers tend to be over-protective of their children and the child ends up being spoiled or over pampered. For instance, in our traditional Zimbabwean culture, a marriage is regarded as complete after it has been blessed with children (Chinyoka, 2012). Experience has shown that when a child is born after many years of childlessness, that child is bound to be spoiled and over protected, and this may end up imposing adverse effects on the child's holistic development.

Within the traditional cultures, child rearing practices are based on a culturally bound understanding of what children need and what they are expected to become. Bornstein (2002) proclaims that child rearing practices are embedded in a culture and determine to a larger extent, the behaviours and expectations surrounding the child's birth, infancy, childhood, adolescence and the way the child will parent as adults. Within the African and Western cultures, child rearing practices include activities concerned with providing

emotional security and reducing a child's stress. Thus, providing shelter, clothing, feeding, bathing and supervision of the child's toileting are some of the child rearing practices. The practices also include preventing and attending to a child's illness, nurturing and showing affection, interacting and stimulating play, socialising as well providing the child with a relatively safe environment for exploration (Chao and Sue, 2003). Therefore, there is no way in which parents can evade having a determining effect upon their children's personality, character and competence (Nsameng, 2008).

Neurological development does not occur in a vacuum. Children's cultural contexts provide the major source of their development and the key players are those who care for children (Nsameng, 2008). Lack of these supports has perennial effects on later development, that is, the physical wellbeing as well as social and cognitive development. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the community to see to it that children are raised appropriately (Chinyoka, 2012).

Authorities on child development have generally accepted the assumption that parents, as primary caregivers, exert the original and perhaps the most significant influence on the development of the child's present and future emotional health. Child's development is therefore strongly influenced by the immediate family, particularly by their home environment, their social environment and the culture in which they grow up (Chao and Sue, 1995). The development of children's learned social skills and behaviours is subject to significant moulding and modification by the environments in which they grow and develop (Bronfrenbrenner, 1979). Consequently, the relationship between a parent and a child is of utmost importance. The nature of parent-to-child interactions and how they deal with their emotions have an impact on the developing child. Examples set by parents as models are extremely important as a basis for a child's interpersonal relations and social behaviour (Utting, 2007). The researchers are therefore of the view that child-rearing practices, as an environmentally orientated developmental process, play an important role in the child's development and in later life.

Relationships enable young children to care about people by establishing the human connection between self and others. As a consequence of early relationships, young children seek to understand the feelings, thoughts and expectations of others, as well as the importance of cooperation and sharing. The young child's identity is shaped by the interactions that they have with others who are significant in their lives. These are parents, childcare providers, and other family members. The quality of these early relationships has a far more significant influence on early learning than has previously been understood (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1995).

In Zimbabwe parents have a set of child-rearing beliefs and practices that are derived from traditional culture and based on consensus within the culture about what is natural, normal and necessary in raising young children. The context of child-care in many societies including in Chivi, Zimbabwe is composed of many things including parenting styles. A great deal of literature published before the 1990's examined the effects of parenting styles on children's outcomes, particularly establishing the benefits to children of authoritative parenting as opposed to the negative outcomes produced by authoritarian and permissive parenting (Demo and Cox, 2000). The context of child-care has until recently been rather stable and with adequate resources to support the traditional way of life. Sub Saharan Africa in which Zimbabwe is located has long been classified as being at the traditional end of the modernisation continuum (Evans and Myers, 1994). However, the invasion of modern style concepts and changes in the economic conditions, social organisation and family structure such as the rise of female-headed households are reshaping and in some instances even replacing the traditional practices such as female circumcision which has deleterious effects on the African girl-child. Many traditional child-rearing practices which have evolved over centuries have proved to be beneficial for children's optimal development (Evans and Myers, 1994).The replacement of these practices by 'modern' but inappropriate practices has had a negative impact on the healthy development of children.

Knowing about the influence of rearing practices on the child's development is very critical. Research on health and developmental psychology suggest that there are actions taken by caregivers that are

supportive of children's growth and development and there are also some that are detrimental. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) even specifies that children have a right to their cultural identity. However, these should be those practices which ensure the survival and development of the child which should be respected. By detecting and understanding the effects of child rearing practices on children's holistic development, it is possible to identify the practices which should be supported and those which ought to be discouraged.

The structure of the modern family is almost unrecognisable when compared with that of traditional families. Due to many factors such as economic hardships, the extended family members now feel that as a family on their own without an extra member, resources are not enough. Nuclear and single-parent families are left more and more to raise children on their own without the help of extended family networks. Nowadays extended family members often are too far away, or too busy with their own hectic schedules to be significant contributors in children's upbringing. Moreover, this breakdown of child-rearing structures is not limited to families (Nsameng, 2008). Neighbours who used to play a critical role in child rearing if the need arose, do not associate with each other on a regular basis as it was in the past and are rarely available to assist in child-rearing.

In the past, in rural areas such as Chivi in Zimbabwe, the extended family structure would provide support for families to live in a wholesome and non-threatening way. Child rearing responsibility was divided among many members of the community and no single individual was overburdened with the care, discipline or feeding of a child (Chand, 2000). Nowadays life styles have since changed; families are living in scattered places due to industrialisation and urbanisation. The common current is that, most parents who are working; leave child rearing in the hands of child-minders, nurseries or preschools. Hence forth, child development is now mostly influenced by the type of care the child receives (Arendell, 1997).

One important task of parenting is the socialization of children. This task requires parental expectations and guidance. These change with the development of the child to encourage positive child outcomes. Baumrind (1978) on the effects of authoritative parental control on children's behaviour shows that, the socially competent child can be described as possessing independence, social responsibility, vigour, and achievement orientation. Achievement orientation is the drive to seek intellectual challenges and solve problems efficiently and with persistence.

Although some cultures such as those in Asia and Latin America have maintained interdependent, extended family networks and communities, mainstream Zimbabwean culture is experiencing cases of family fragmentation. The more fragmented families and communities become, the more parents must turn to strangers to raise their children in the form of child-minders, Day Care centres and Nursery schools (Chand, 2000). Although these centres often are equipped to handle large numbers of children and their formal educational needs, crucial components of child-rearing have been lost with the dissolution of the extended family. In Zimbabwe, the roles played by ECD caregivers and administrators are a far cry from those once played by aunts, uncles, grandparents, neighbours and family friends. The dominant ways parents express affection and implement discipline is generally identified as authoritarian, authoritative, permissive and uninvolved (Tarullo, 2007).

Authoritarian parents are characterised by strictness, high degree of parental control, narrow limits on the child's behaviour and discipline (Evans, 1994). Such parents set rules that children are expected to follow and they do not explain the reasoning behind their expectations and punishment may be used to redirect rebellious actions. The focus is primarily on behaviour and this can create children who are not independent thinkers but are compliant with their parents' values. Such a child rearing practice has adverse effects on children's holistic development. Children from such families may at times develop a low-self-esteem, lack initiative abilities, lack good social skills among many what (Evans and Myers, 1994).

On one hand children of strict parents may suffer from low self-esteem, lack of confidence, anxiety problems and inferiority complex (Haiman, 2013).They may grow up feeling as though their parents do not

listen to them or acknowledge them. This may cause children to believe that their feelings or thoughts are not respected, valid or important. These children may not feel accepted or worthy of affection and love because their parents only give them attention when they feel that the children have done well.

Authoritarian parents may require their children to spend countless hours mastering instruments, sports or homework assignments. This may result in young children being overachievers and being very successful in school and extracurricular activities (O'Connor and Scott, 2007). However, the practice may cause the young children to hate school as they are driven by the goal rather than the actual process of learning and development. A child of strict parents may focus on the mechanics of memorisation for the purpose of achievement rather than the process of learning. Children of strict parents may be passive or submissive because they have learned that everyone has a fixed role in life. Strict parents limit individuality and independence in their parents. Children raised by such parents are more traditional; comply to formalism and are less likely to try new things or experiment. They may also lack the ability to deal with stress or express their emotions (Baumrind, 1966).

Authoritative parents encourage children's independent activity, responsibility and problem-solving skills. Authoritative parents are democratic and these establish responsible expectations and rules that children are expected to follow (Bornstein, 2002).There is more conversation, however than authoritarian child-rearing in the ways families dialogue about choices and consequences. Such parents encourage children's independent activity, responsibility and problem-solving skills. When children do well they may be affirmed by an authoritarian parent. The authoritative adults' role is to help children learn the wisdom behind rules and share them in a loving manner (Judy, 2000). The goal, values and life styles of parents have a great effect on the growing child. As the earliest and most durable source of socialisation, a child's parents are the first people with whom he identifies, and they remain the strongest influence in his development (Sonia and Amar, 2012). Thus improving the quality of parent-child relationship can be expected to have positive effects on the individual child, family and the society as a whole.

As for permissive parents, child-rearing is marked by the habit of pampering their child. Such parents believe that their children cannot handle discipline due to a low sense of self-esteem or maturity and end up becoming lenient on values (Sonia and Amar, 2012). Children of such parents may learn to whine to get what they want and seldom tied down to routines they are accountable. There is a popular catch phrase which says 'there are no problem children, only problem parents'. This statement refers in part to an explanation of why children fail to adapt to society's norms (Sonia and Amar, 2012).Most parents make many complaints about their children and they often become worried and tensed about their child's incompetence and inabilities (Sonia and Amar,2012). Parents should realise that they are the people who can incorporate all the necessary abilities and incompetencies of life into their child. Hence the way in which parents bring up their children surely influences their overall development.

Uninvolved parenting style generally is seen in a parent who is detached from his child's life. Several unintentional factors can contribute to this approach such as divorce or a high-demanding job that creates unplanned separation between the adult and the child (Berg, 2011). In one study by O'Connor and Scott (2007) on factors of child rearing practices, they determined that other parents who have this style may have had children without the maturity or responsibility to care for them and typically remain more interested in their own desires than their child's needs. In extreme situations, uninvolved parents may mentally devalue the worth of their child to the level that they become emotionally or physically abusive. Bronfrenbrenner (1959) contends that the family should provide nurturance, affection and opportunities of growth which have direct impact on the child's development. If the system does not adequately provide the needs of the child, the child is therefore likely to have developmental problems.

Perepletchikova and Kazdin (2005) say that parenting plays a role in how each child acquires developmentally appropriate social and emotional skills. Having developmentally appropriate social and emotional skills is crucial to mental health, interpersonal skills and is a basis for relationship building. Developing a secure, positive self-esteem, positive interactions with others and control over one's feelings

during the preschool years is vital to future personality development. The domains of parenting such as communication style, levels of responsiveness and levels of control are used in combination with one another to create an individual's overall parenting style. Chen, Dong and Zhou (1997) studied second graders in China and reported that teacher-reported aggression was predicted by higher score on these studies, authoritarian style was associated with the highest levels of aggression and authoritative style predicts the lowest.

Similar to attachment, early parenting behaviour shapes the way a child perceives himself or herself that he or she is a valuable figure and is worth love and help. In contrast, harsh, power assertive and neglectful parenting behaviours seem to inform the child that he or she is disliked and hopeless and others are not responsive and helpful l (Maccoby and Martin,1983). Moreover as young children tend to imitate things they observe, parenting style is also supposed to be a template of the child's later behaviours, exhibited both inside and outside the family. Maccoby and Martin (1983) add that, it is generally accepted that children who have experienced a stable authoritative parenting style are the least likely to develop aggressive attitudes and behaviour.

When early childhood educators acknowledge and respect children's home language and culture, ties between the programmes are strengthened. This atmosphere provides increased opportunity for learning because young children feel supported, nurtured and connected not only to their home communities and families' but also to teachers and the educational setting (NAEYC,1995). Teachers should therefore actively seek parental involvement and pursue establishing a partnership with children's families for the ultimate growth and development of these young children.

Materials and Methods

The study falls within a qualitative research paradigm. The descriptive survey was used in this study. The design was preferred because it concerns itself with providing rich descriptions of phenomenona that can occur without intervention of an experiment or an artificially contrived treatment (Cresswell, 2010). This research approach does not simply concern itself with amassing and tabulating facts but includes proper analysis, interpretation, comparisons, identification of trends and relationships. This descriptive survey research was designed to provide a picture of a situation as it naturally happens (Burns and Grove, 2003).

Population

The population comprised of all the ECD B children; all ECD B teachers and parents of all ECD B children at Madyangove Primary School in Chivi District. However, the population was too large and could have included more cases than required. Therefore, a manageable sample was drawn from the population.

The sample and sampling procedure

From the selected population, the researchers drew a sample to explore how child rearing practices impact on young children's holistic development. Pollitt (2000) confirms that in sampling a portion that represents the whole population is selected. Simple random sampling was used and thirty-six (36) ECD B pupils, fourteen (14) parents and three (3) caregivers were sampled (Creswell, 2010).

Research instruments

Research instruments were carefully chosen in order to obtain useful and meaningful data. Questionnaires were used to collect data from the ECD caregivers, children were observed during their learning activities and interviews were conducted to obtain information from parents (Best and Khan, 2007). A pilot study was conducted to ensure the validity and reliability of the study. Pilot testing helped the researchers to make layout adjustments and some modifications in content appropriateness in preparation for the main study (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché, and Delport, 2011).
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Data analysis procedures

Analysis of qualitative data is an active and interactive process (Pollitt 2000). Hence data from interviews with the parents was analysed through rich thick descriptions to illustrate their views, opinions

and experiences on child rearing practices. The data from the interviews, observations and documents was done through expansion of notes. The analysis and interpretation led to findings, conclusions and recommendations on how parents can best raise their children so as not to affect their total development.

Ethical Issues
Ethics principles of autonomy, justice and non-malfeasance were upheld in this study, The researchers explained the purpose of the study and assured the participants that they would not face any harm from publication, presentation or dissemination of their views or experiences (Babbie, 2004). The study adhered to these ethics and also explained to participants the benefit of the study to them and their children. Participants were also assured that the research would not bear their names.

Presentation of Bio-data Results
The respondents were required to indicate their gender on the first section of the questionnaire and interview guide administered.

Table 1: Respondents' Gender   N=17

Gender	Number	Percentage
Males	2	12
Females	15	88
Total	**17**	**100**

Data in Table 1 above shows that 88% (15) of the respondents were females and only 12% (2) were males. This may suggest that ECD caregiving is mainly dominated by females.

Regarding ECD teachers' knowledge on ECD issues, it was important for the respondents to show their professional qualifications. Only ECD teachers were required to indicate this information on the questionnaire administered to them. Table 2 shows the teacher's professional qualifications.

Table 2: ECD Teachers' Professional Qualifications   N=3

Teacher's Professional Qualification	Number	Percentage
Para-professional(Trained)	0	0
Para-professional(Untrained)	1	33
Dip in Infant	0	0
Dip in ECD	2	67
Dip in General	0	0
Bed in ECD	0	0
Med in ECD	0	0
TOTAL	**3**	**100**

The data in Table 2 show that 67% (2) of the respondents have acquired some knowledge on child development through training. 33% (1) operate on general knowledge and as such ECD teachers do not hold any professional qualifications from recognised institutions to teach in both public and private ECD centres. However, their activities or services are recognised by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education as they are supervised by the Ministry's District ECD Trainer.

The period served by teachers is also vital because experience influences how children are handled or responded to. The teachers who participated in the study were also asked to indicate their teaching experience. Table 3 shows the length of teachers' experience.

Table 3: Length of Teaching Experience   N=3

Teaching Experience	Number	Percentage
0-3 Years	2	67
4-6 Years	1	33
7-10 Years	0	0
10+ Years	0	0
TOTAL	**3**	**100**

The data in Table 3 show that 67% (2) have a teaching experience of less than three years and only 33% (1) have served between four to six years. This may imply that teachers who have served longer are more

experienced in handling child development issues than those with less time. Authorities on parenting styles also suggest that in some cases, parents or guardians' marital status influence how children are reared. So ECD parents/guardians who participated in the study were required to indicate their marital status as presented in the table on the next page.

Table 4: ECD Parents/Guardians' Marital Status   N=14

Parents/Guardians' Marital Status	Number	Percentage
Married	7	50
Widow	3	21
Divorced	0	0
Single	4	29
TOTAL	**14**	**100**

Table 4 above reveals that 50 %(7) of the respondents are married, 21 %(3) are widows and twenty-nine 29% (4) are single parents. Due to the respondents having different marital statuses, they are likely to have different parenting styles.

Respondents were also required to give detailed answers to some questions on child rearing practices and their impact on young children's development. Their responses were presented in a thematic approach as presented overleaf.

Themes are Presented Visually in Figure 1 below.
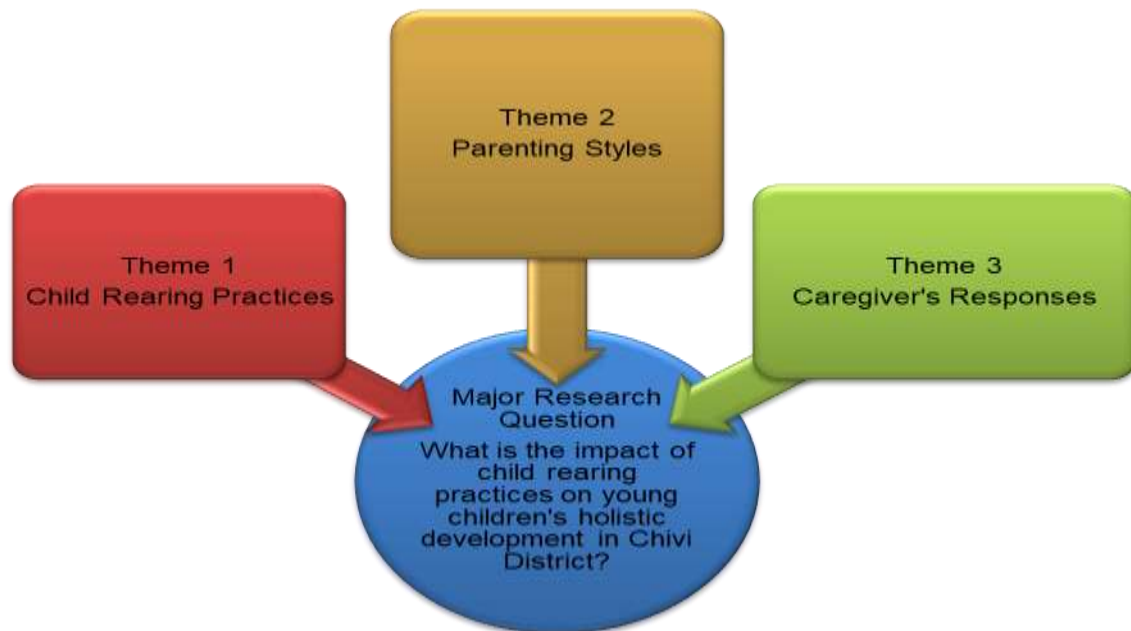
Figure 1: Research Themes

Theme 1: Children are growing up in nuclear families and attend day care centres

ECD parents understand that child rearing practices are the ways of bringing up children. This involves a process of promoting the physical, social and health, emotional and cognitive aspects of the child. One parent went further to explain that child rearing practices encompass a lot more things.

> "Kukudza vana uchivapa rudo, kuvaendesa
> kuchikoro, kuvatengera zvokupfeka uye
> kuchengetedza kodzero dzavo dzose"

These words can be translated to mean that *child rearing involves giving children love in the families and honouring their rights as well*. One other respondent in particular also explained her answer by saying that she views parenting styles as involving sending children to school. Such a response shows that parents in Chivi see parenting in terms of the responsibilities they have towards their children's upbringing.

This answer led the researchers to enquire why the respondent opines that child rearing involves sending children to school. The parent highlighted that in this day that we are living children have the right to go to school and that is the best way of raising children. This made the researchers realise that in Chivi District parents' value education and so give their children the opportunity of attending school.

Parents were also asked to indicate if they are staying with their children or not giving reasons in the process. Most parents said that they stay with their own children and the common reasons given were that their relatives are far away in the rural areas and have their own families to look after and cannot sustain an extra load. Others indicated that as young couples they want to look after their children themselves and take up the responsibilities of sending their children to school and trace their children's development on their own. One respondent highlighted as below,

> "Iyezvino zvakaoma kupa umwe munhu musengwa
> wokuti ariritire mhuri yako nokuti mari irikunetsa,
> saka tinogara nemhuri yangu ichidya zvandinodya
> tiri pamwechete."

This means that most parents are staying as nuclear families due to the fact that resources are limited and so by staying together it helps each family to share and live with the meagre resources they would have got at that particular time. This implies that the economic climate has a part to play in the way children are raised today.

ECD teachers also cited that extended family networks are slowly relinquishing due to the fact that there are so many cases of child abuse which are happening in these families which are being reported almost on a daily basis but were not common in the past. Most child abuse cases or rituals are being performed and are affecting children in the extended family circle. So with the media reports, police awareness campaigns and the general public education, most parents now prefer staying with their own children although there are some like the orphaned or abandoned who have no other option than staying with the relatives or at institutions.

However, there are some relatives who are very responsible in looking after children under their care like one grandmother highlighted during the interview.

> "Ini ndinochengeta muzukuru wangu, ndakamusiirwa
> nomwanasikana wangu uyo akainda naichochi chamazuva
> ano. Chikoro ndinotomubhadharira adzidze sezvinongoitawo
> vamwe vezera rake."

This respondent was left to look after her grandchild following her daughter's passing on and indicated that she had the responsibility to look after the child and meeting all of the child's needs. So in such circumstances, extended families are found and relied upon but they are not as common as there were a long time ago.

The researchers also asked the ECD parents how they promote children's development in their homes as a way of establishing the way they interact with their children. Most of the respondents had similar answers of how they interrelate and respond to their children's development. Giving children different activities and providing them with nutritious food and toys were common answers from the parents. Others said that they teach their children pro-social skills and such children do not take what they would not have been given. This showed that parents in the district are also concerned with the impartation of cultural values, morals and self-help skills as they raise their children. When a child misbehaves, the majority of the respondents indicated that they resort to beating while only a few others said that they use moral stories to correct the misbehaviour.

One respondent who is a widow revealed in her responses that she uses beating as a way of maintaining authority and instil discipline over her children. She said that she struggles to make ends meet and so beating her children makes them respect her and save the hard-earned resources. However, from the observations it was noted that there is a child who was always beating others and the teachers' records showed that they have severally invited the mother to the school and discuss the child's welfare but it was all in vain. The child comes to school without a lunch box, takes other children's food and his uniform has no buttons. Research equates such parenting characteristics to uninvolved or neglectful hence revealing that uninvolved, authoritative and authoritarian parents are found in Chivi District.

Theme 2: How Parents' Nurturing Style Influence their Children's Holistic Development

In a bid to understand the impact of parenting styles on children's development, the respondents were asked to comment on whether there is a relationship between how parents raise their children and the children's development. All the ECD caregivers' responses showed that there is a relationship between the two. One of the respondents said that the relationship is there because the child's first development begins before birth then continues until death and parents are the agents who facilitate the progression of the child's development. The other respondents highlighted that a child who is raised up in a violent home learns to be violent and aggressive but one who grows up in a peaceful home learns to be calm.

The researchers also noted one child whose behaviour drew her attention. This child mostly would cause others to cry. He would beat others, take their things and upon checking his record books, the researchers found that he was staying with a single mother. The child's mother neither responds to the communication made in the communication record book nor attends meetings such as the consultation day. Even the child's dressing leaves a lot to be desired. The child came to school with a shirt with no buttons and shoes were not laced on most occasions. Also evidenced by the observations made, most children who stay with their parents had no particular developmental problem detected except for one whose social record book indicated that he cries a lot even without a proper reason or cause due to the fact that he is the only child. This therefore, shows that parenting styles have an impact on all the child's developmental aspects.

Theme 3: Caregivers Use Positive and Negative Techniques in Response to Children's Behaviours.

Some of the answers given by the ECD teachers on questions in the questionnaire enabled the researchers to find out how they respond to children from different parenting backgrounds. However, the researchers complemented these responses with observations made to ascertain the true picture of their reactions to these young children. One of the caregivers said that she certainly handled children differently because she shows love to those who come from a home which does not give love; she gives more attention to those who misbehave and show them the right path. Hence this implies that, teachers use individualism in their teaching. The other two participants shared similar sentiments though their views are different from their colleague. The two aired out that, they treat children from different parenting backgrounds equally and fairly through showing all children love. The teachers instilled moral values through stories despite the children's backgrounds.

One question on the questionnaire also intended to find out the recommendations caregivers make to a parent whose child exhibits antisocial behaviour. The respondents indicated that the first step is to invite the parent to the school to discuss with him his child's behaviour. During the parent-teacher discussions, ways of helping the child from misbehaving can then be suggested. However, the respondents highlighted that they usually invite the parent after several attempts have been made help the child stop misbehaving. The teachers also said that they would suggest the activities in which parents may engage their children such as reading moral stories to them and playing games so that the child realises the consequences of being disobedient. However, observations made revealed that at times the teachers use beating as a measure to correct misbehaviour.

Discussion of Findings

The findings were discussed following the sub research questions that guided the study.

Most children in Chivi District come from nuclear families that are authoritative, authoritarian or neglectful.

The first research question sought to find out the child rearing practices in Chivi District.

Findings regarding the child rearing practices show that there are many different ways in which parents bring up their children in Chivi District. Experience has shown that these child rearing practices are slightly different from how children were reared in the past. However, O'Connor and Scott (2007) argue that, there are actions taken by caregivers that are supportive of children's growth and development and there are also some that are detrimental. Therefore, parents should use ways of raising children that bring about positive development. Today it has been evidenced from the data collected that children are reared by nuclear families where parents, married or single raise their children on their own without much intervention of the extended family. Very few respondents indicated that they have their children being looked after by their parents (grandparents) or other relatives. The children's social record and other record books also show that the majority of those children staying with their relatives have lost one or both parents and so are left in the hands of the extended family. Consistent with Cross (1986), most children of working parents are growing

up in day care centres but this has since robbed them of growing into an ecological social context where people live, work and eat together as a family as it used to be in the past.

Baumrind (1971) says that parenting is based on the most important aspects which are responsiveness and demandingness. The data gathered on child rearing practices reveals that parents have dominant ways which they use to express affection and implement discipline in their children. Some of the most common ways in which children are raised in Chivi as evidenced by parents during their interaction with the researchers during interviews are that, some parents are too strict to their children and others are also lenient with their children to an extent of spoiling them. Bronfrenbrenner (1983) in his Ecological Systems Theory proclaims that the microsystem which is the child's immediate environment may provide the nurturing centrepiece for the child or become a haunting set of memories through ominous upbringing. The interaction between the child and his family has a great bearing on the child's development.

On a broader perspective, most parents in Chivi District are authoritative and authoritarian in their parenting nature. However, for some parents their authoritarianism is situational as evidenced by some widows who were amongst the participants of the study. Such parents are too strict when it comes to the handling and use of resources but in other circumstances they use democratic ways to bring up their children. However, very few parents are neglectful as evidenced by the observations made. In line with Berg (2011)'s views, several unintentional factors can contribute to being uninvolved or neglectful, such as divorce or a high demanding job. Aspects such as the parents' workplace are in the exosystem where the child is not directly involved but feels the impact of the interaction within the system (Bronfrenbrenner, 1979). Basing on some of their responses, however it seems as if some of these parents are not aware of the impact of their parenting style on children's development.

Neglectful and authoritarian parenting hinders children's holistic development.

Research question two sought to find out the impact of parenting styles on children's holistic development. Findings regarding the impact of parenting styles on children's holistic development are that parenting backgrounds influence on some aspects if not all domains of a child's development. Observations made revealed that some of the children from uninvolved parenting backgrounds or where the parent is single and has an unstable source of income, portrays misbehaviours. For instance, one case observed where the child was always causing others to cry by beating them and taking their things. Such a child stayed with a mother who seemed to be emotionally unavailable and to some extent abusive to the child. It was pointed out in the Canadian Council on Learning (2007) that a child of an uninvolved parent may grow up without the direction and guidance he needs to develop his moral conscience and set appropriate goals for the future. Evans (1994) also views that in extreme cases uninvolved parents may mentally devalue the worth of their child to the level that they become emotionally or physically abusive. This is true because the neighbour who was asked to stand in for this child's parent on Consultation Day testified that on many occasions this child's mother had beaten him. The result shows that uninvolved parents are also found in Chivi District. Perepletchikova and Kazdin (2005) conceive that parenting plays a role in how each child acquires developmentally appropriate social and emotional skills. It reveals that, how children are reared at home impacts on how they interact on their day to day lives. Children who come from peaceful homes were seen to interact well with others but those from questionable backgrounds such as this child were easily identified through their behaviours and closely observed. This is supported by a research conducted by Baumrind (1967) who found out that children of authoritative parents are encouraged to engage in independent activities, are responsible and have problem-solving skills.

The parent's understanding on the impact of child rearing practices on children's development is vital because it influences the way they rear and bring up their children. Since the way children are reared has an influence in their holistic development, a deep understanding of the impact of these child rearing practices is necessary. The child's immediate interactions and experience determine his development (Bronfrenbrenner, 1979). The caregiver mediates much of the child's experiences. When a caregiver is unwell for example owing to depression, their capacity to care for young children suffers. If a mother is too depressed to pay attention to her child, the child gives up signalling its distress because the mother is not responding. A cycle is set up where the child's health, nutritional status and psychological development are put at risk (Alderman and Engel, 2008). Literature also reveals that extreme stimulus deprivation impacts on the child's brain development, which is why children from unstable backgrounds were easily detected.

Research has also evinced that children's development of cognitive and social skills needed for later success in school may be best supported by a parenting style known as responsive parenting. Accordingly, if parents or guardians are not aware of the impact of their responsiveness, their children's development is affected. O'Connor and Scott (2007) say that there are actions taken by caregivers that are supportive of children's growth and development and there are also some that are detrimental. Some parents hence end up spoiling their children in the name of showing them love. This is a common scenario in our African society that when a couple has taken long without a child, they tend to spoil the child when they finally bear one (Chinyoka, 2012). This was proven true by one parent who confirmed that following her husband's death, she was over protective to her only child which had a detrimental effect on the child's development. The child was antisocial and could not play with others well. The teacher's records also confirmed that there are children who at times grumble over things saying that there are taken by others, yet the class play materials are supposed to be shared by all children and these children mostly stay with one parent.

Children with good social skills and a positive development progression, have either both parents or single parents. They either stay with responsible grandparents or relatives who are authoritative in nature. This was proved by the children's record books, the observations and responses made during interviews. Records such as the communication record book where the parent is required to respond to the teacher's communication either by granting requests made in the book or attending meetings or by helping the child with some homework reveal the extent to which a parent is concerned with the child's development. Ginsberg (2004) concurs that authoritative parents are communicative and supportive to their children's activities and are responsive to their children's needs. Hence, this agrees with what was observed and found in this study. Wearing clean clothes with all buttons on also demonstrate positive parenting in young children and shows that the child's Mesosystem is functioning well according to Bronfrenbrenner Ecological Theory (1979).

Caregivers used both positive and negative techniques to respond to children's behaviours.

Research question three sought to find out how caregivers respond to the behaviours exhibited by children from different parenting backgrounds. The findings revealed that the caregivers treat children almost fairly. Nonetheless, this was not true as observed. When a child misbehaved, the caregivers would shout at the child or even threaten to beat him or her without considering who the child was. Maybe this goes back to the question of lacking adequate knowledge on ECD issues and the best way to handle these young children. However in the questionnaires, they indicated that they would call the parent and talk to him about the child's misbehaving. Inviting parents to school is supported by McMahon (2004) who says that parent-support programs which are delivered either through home visits or community centres to help parents handle behaviour problems in their children are critical in child development.

The caregivers also suggested possible ways which the parent may use, to reprimand the child or change their parenting style. During indoor and outdoor learning activities, the caregivers encouraged children to share toys, chairs and even take turns to play on equipment. In the communication record, teachers show that they communicate with parents on different issues and matters which concern their child. This is a good approach for the optimum development of the child. The behaviours and practices of caregivers (mothers, siblings, fathers and child care providers) to provide the food, health care, stimulation and emotional support necessary for children's healthy survival, growth and development have powerful effects on their survival, growth and development (WHO, 2004). Not only the practices themselves, but also the way they are performed in terms of affection and responsiveness to the child are critical to a child's survival, growth and development. This is consistent with what is cited in (WHO, 2004) that there are key determinants that show quality of an environment provided for children. So, caregivers in Chivi play a critical role in propelling children's development by positively responding to their behaviours.

Literature reveals that it is very important for ECD caregivers to involve parents and other important stakeholders in children's activities for the programme to be comprehensive. The research conducted found out that caregivers involved parents through communication, record books as well as inviting them to Consultation Days where the teacher and the parent can discuss the child's development. Chand (2000) agrees that home visits done at intervals are also beneficial for children. For instance, the case of that child who was observed portraying naughty behaviours. Sensitive and responsive caregiving is a requirement for the healthy neurophysiological, physical and psychological development of a child (WHO, 2004). Such a parent would therefore require the teacher to visit the parent's place at any time to talk or discuss with her

about child development issues and the parent's role in the upbringing of that child. Bateson (2000) concurs with the finding that the focus would be on working with the parent to develop his or her understanding of child development and skills in providing care and stimulating activities for the child.

Conclusions

The study concluded that most children in Chivi district come from nuclear families that are authoritative, authoritarian or neglectful. The child rearing practices exercised nowadays are slightly different from those in the past. The impact of neglectful parenting had more visible effects on one of the children observed although all the other parenting styles also have an impact on children's development. The data also showed that caregivers use both positive and negative techniques to respond to young children's behaviours. Caregivers at times shout or resort to beating up children as a way of controlling misbehaviour. It is commendable, however, that caregivers communicate and interact with parents during meetings and on occasions such as Consultation Days.

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