

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the conclusions and recommendations of this study are put forward in accordance with the process followed in developing and implementing the training programme for optimal caretaking of the infant at the safe and familiar environment of his own home. The research problem of quality care for the infant during the time that his mother is working was identified and discussed in chapter 1. In order to care optimally for an infant, it is essential for the caregiver to gain knowledge and skills about infancy and the developmental tasks that the infant should achieve during this phase, in order to grow and develop as a self-actualized whole. The development and developmental tasks of the infant were discussed in chapter 2. Chapter 3 is a theoretical chapter in which the caregiver was discussed, including her roles, tasks and responsibilities. Development and intervention of the practical training programme were discussed in chapter 4. In chapter 5, the empirical findings with the developing and implementing of the training programme for in-home care of an infant was discussed. From the information gathered during the focus groups with caregivers and with the mothers of infants, as well as from the results of the questionnaires from pre-tests and post-tests, the researcher was able to address the research problem.

#### 6.2 EVALUATION OF THE GOAL

The goal of this study was to develop, implement, and evaluate a social work training programme for the caregiver of an infant, in order to provide in the infant's primary needs and development.

This goal was achieved through a combination of relevant information gained through a literature study, namely interviews with professionals and focus groups held with caregivers and with mothers of infants (chapter 1). The researcher developed a training programme for optimal caretaking of the infant at his home, and implemented it with ten caregivers over a period of ten sessions (chapter 4). A self-developed questionnaire was used for the purpose of pre-test and post-test evaluation (chapter 5).

### 6.3 EVALUATION OF THE OBJECTIVES

The goal is achieved, through intervention research, implementation and evaluation of the training programme for this study. The following objectives were formulated:

- **To build a theoretical frame of reference on existing training programmes for caregivers, early childhood development, and play therapy techniques and mediums, the gestalt approach, and tasks and roles of social workers in early childhood intervention.**

A theoretical frame of reference was built upon existing training programmes for caregivers, early childhood development, play therapy techniques and mediums, the gestalt approach, and tasks and roles of social workers in early childhood intervention. In order to achieve this goal, a literature review was done by examining selected empirical research, reported practice, and identified innovations in relevant quality in-home care of an infant. Relevant literature in various fields was integrated into this study, since societal problems are not confined to the various human and social science disciplines. The researcher also had telephone conversations, personal interviews, and contact through the Internet with professional persons involved in the daily field of children. Their experience, knowledge and insight were valuable to the research problem (chapter 1:15 & 16).

- **To do a need assessment to understand the needs of mothers of infants and their expectations for a training programme for caregivers of infants.**

A need assessment was done to understand the needs of mothers of infants and their expectations for a training programme for caregivers of infants. The researcher followed the two-phase methodology approach. The first phase of this research included the first three steps of the intervention research model of Rothman and Thomas (D&D model), which included problem analysis, project planning, information gathering, and synthesis and design. During this phase, the exploratory design was implemented and the qualitative approach was applied to gain the most and richest data from the mothers of infants for the training programme. The researcher had focus group interviews with twelve working mothers of infants, because they experienced the problem of quality care for their infants (chapter 1:12).

- **To do a need assessment to understand the caregiver's needs and their expectations of a training programme.**

A need assessment was done to understand the caregiver's needs and their expectations of a training programme. Similar procedures as those followed during the needs assessment with the working mothers of infants were followed during needs assessments with the caregivers. A collaborative relationship was formed with the caregivers. The researcher had focus group interviews with ten caregivers. They participated in providing suggestions for quality care of an infant, which were included in the programme. Once the researcher had access to the target groups, she attempted to understand and analyze the issues of quality care for the infant while the mother is working (chapter 1:12).

- **To develop a training programme for caregivers of infants while taking into account the literature study and the knowledge gained from the needs assessments of the mothers of infants and of the caregivers.**

A training programme was developed for caregivers of infants while taking into account the literature study and the knowledge gained from the assessments of the needs of the mothers of infants and the caregivers. The researcher analyzed the critical features of the programmes and practices that have previously addressed the problem of interest. By studying successful and unsuccessful programmes that have attempted to address the problem, the researcher identified potentially useful elements for intervention. Existing knowledge helped to guide, design and develop the training programme. Literature, resources, and functional aids were used in designing the training programme. For the purposes of this study, the D&D model of intervention research was followed, in order to develop a training programme for the caretaking of an infant (chapter 4:96).

- **To implement the training programme with caregivers.**

The training programme was implemented with ten caregivers over a period of ten sessions. The intervention research model of Rothman and Thomas (D&D model) was followed in order to implement this programme (chapter 4:96).

- **To evaluate the impact of the training programme on the caregivers.**

The impact of the training programme that was designed, developed and implemented for the purposes of this study was evaluated in chapter 5.

- **To come to conclusions and recommendations regarding the dissemination of the programme.**

In this chapter, the researcher will come to conclusions and recommendations regarding the dissemination of the programme.

#### **6.4 RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS**

Bless and Higson-Smith (1995:11) defines a hypothesis as a tentative explanation for certain facts that will become part of a theory as soon as it is confirmed by sufficient evidence. It is usually expressed as the statement of a relationship between dependent and independent variables that give direction to the study. The hypothesis is tested through investigation and may be accepted, should the results of the study correlate with the assumptions made in the hypothesis, or rejected, should the findings of the study contradict the statement made in the hypothesis (De Vos, 1998:116).

In light of the aim of this study, the following research **hypothesis** was formulated:

**If a caregiver is trained in accordance with the social work training programme, then the caregiver's knowledge and skills toward caregiving will be enhanced.**

**Sub-hypotheses** were formulated from the main hypothesis:

- Training the caregiver in accordance with the social work training programme (independent variable) will improve her theoretical knowledge about an infant (dependent variable).
- Training the caregiver in accordance with the social work training programme (independent variable) will improve her skills in caring for the infant in her care (dependent variable).

Ten caregivers were selected, and they willingly agreed to be part of this research (chapter 1). These ten caregivers were part of the intervention programme for the duration of 10 sessions. They were trained in accordance with the self-developed social work training programme (chapter 4). Through preparation, active verbal participation during sessions and involvement in role-play, these respondents all developed theoretical knowledge and practical skills about the infant. Their knowledge and skills toward optimal caring of an infant at home was enhanced. The caregiver has developed insight in the value of the various

mediums and techniques, in order to apply them with the infant at home for the purpose of stimulating his developmental tasks (chapter 5).

In light of the quantitative findings (chapter 5) from the evaluation with the quasi-experimental one-group pretest-post-test design, the researcher came to the following conclusions:

- The caregivers developed insight into the value of gaining knowledge of infants and skills in infant care, in order to optimally care for infants in the safe and familiar environment of their own homes.
- With the knowledge and skills which the caregivers had gained about the developmental tasks which the infant has to achieve, they will be able to optimally stimulate the infants during the time they care for the infants.
- The caregivers will know how to make contact with infants on the infants' level and how to stimulate the infants on this level through play. They are equipped to apply the various mediums and techniques in which they gained theoretical knowledge and practical skills.
- Although none of the caregivers had previous training in childcare, they all had practical experience of at least six months in caring for children. By internalizing this newly-gained knowledge and skills about the infant, they were empowered to optimally care for infants at the infants' homes.
- Through this intervention programme, the caregivers gained knowledge and skills about the five different senses that need to be stimulated in order for the infant to grow and develop optimally. The caregivers developed insight in the importance of stimulating the five senses through various mediums. Through practical experience/role-play they now know how to implement these mediums and how to incorporate them into their daily caretaking of the infant at home.
- Mediums such as reading books, building puzzles, preparing food, and reading or saying rhymes, were included in the training programme in order to stimulate the infant's cognitive development. The researcher came to the conclusion (in chapter 5) that the caregivers initially viewed these mediums as leisure activities during the pre-test. They developed insight in the value of applying these mediums in order to stimulate the cognitive development.
- Through gaining knowledge and skills about the emotional development of the infant, the caregivers will be able to stimulate the infant to identify his emotions, to own it, and to express it through various mediums and techniques.

- The caregivers developed insight into the use of “pretend play with a toy telephone” and “board games” in order to stimulate the infant’s social development. By applying these mediums with the infant, the infant will be enabled to practice his social skills in the safe environment of his own home.
- Through being part of the training programme for this study, the caregivers now have insight into the value of applying the mediums “mirror”, drawing pictures, making music, and playing with sand with the infant, in order to stimulate the infant’s self-image.
- They gained the knowledge and skills in order to help the infant to focus on himself, and to be aware of himself, which will bring him in contact with himself in the here and now.
- The caregivers now know that it is healthy and appropriate for the infant to have a “security blanket” or a favourite toy to carry around with him, in order to stimulate his self-image.
- The caregivers have the insight, knowledge and skills to let the infant take responsibility for himself and his actions, which the infant can only learn through experience. They will now be able to allow infants to do things for themselves, since they know the value of these actions.

From the evaluation results of chapter 5, the researcher came to the conclusion that the theoretical information and practical skills which the caregivers learned, and the insight that developed through being part of this research study, are sufficient to come to a good understanding of the growth and development of the infant and of how to stimulate him while caring for him at home, in order for him to grow and develop optimally as a self-actualized whole.

The researcher therefore is of the opinion that the caregiver is trained according to the social work training programme (independent variable), and that the caregiver’s knowledge and skills (dependent variable) toward caregiving is enhanced. The researcher comes to the conclusion that the independent variable had an effect on the dependent variable. Therefore the hypothesis of this research study is accepted.

## **6.5 SUMMARIZED CONCLUSIONS OF THIS RESEARCH**

The researcher will come to a conclusion of this research by discussing the value of each chapter.

- In chapter one, the researcher gave an introduction to this research. The choice of this subject was motivated, and the problem was formulated. The goal and the research methodology were explained in order to make justifiable conclusions to expand professional knowledge about human behaviour.
- In chapter two, the developmental stages of the infant were discussed with reference to developmental theories. The purpose of this chapter was for the caregiver to develop a better concept and understanding of the influence of the working mother and of caretaking at home on the growth and development of the infant. For optimal caregiving to the infant, the caregiver must have knowledge and insight into the developmental tasks and skills which the infant must achieve in order to grow and develop as a self-actualized organism and as an integrated whole. Caregiving to an infant at home, within the guidelines of the gestalt approach, is an all-inclusive approach which includes the total organism and his environment. The value of the internal interdependence between the organism and his environment is that the infant is not in isolation when his mother returns to work, because the external factors have an influence on his socio-emotional functioning which must be integrated during his care. Caregiving to an infant is integrated within the gestalt approach, which provides the caregiver with guidelines, principles and techniques to stimulate the infant to optimal growth and development.
- Chapter three is a theoretical chapter in which the caregiver was discussed within the family system. The caregiver was the respondent in this research, and the researcher developed insight in the characteristics, roles, and tasks of the caregiver.
- Chapter four is a theoretical chapter that focused on the training programme for the caregiver, in order to optimally care for the infant in the safe milieu of his own home. In order to develop this training programme, a needs assessment was done to understand the needs and expectations of the mothers of the infants and of the caregivers. When developing the training programme, the researcher took into account the information gained from the needs assessments and the knowledge gained from the literature study. The researcher strived to integrate the theoretical guidelines of the gestalt approach and the developmental phases of the infant. Play techniques and mediums, supported by relevant aids, were adopted within the gestalt approach. The goal of this programme is to guide the caregiver to make contact with the infant and to care optimally for him in the safe and familiar surroundings of his home, while his mother is at work. By following this programme, the caregiver will be able to use and integrate gestalt principles and techniques and play techniques and mediums to guide the infant to successfully master his developmental tasks. Through this programme, the

caregiver obtained the necessary knowledge and skills that will empower her and help her to care for the infant in a preventive manner, to solve problems, and to develop within the infant's own home environment.

A practical training programme for optimal caretaking of an infant is composed by integrating the theoretical components of the gestalt approach, techniques and mediums in play therapy, and the developmental theories of infancy. By training a caregiver according to this programme, the imbalance of optimal caretaking of an infant in the community was addressed.

A programme was developed for the development and enhancement of the developmental tasks and skills of infancy. Structure is provided to this training programme by dividing it into the five workdays of the week. Each day programme focuses upon developing and stimulating the infant's physical, cognitive, emotional, social, and self-esteem skills. A variety of alternative techniques and mediums is suggested for each of the five developmental tasks of infancy. The caregiver must daily select and apply one suggested alternative in each of the five developmental categories. A variety of alternatives provide in the stimulation of the infant's individual needs, preferences and circumstances.

This programme does not constitute therapeutic intervention, but rather forms an integrated part of the gestalt and play-therapeutic goal with the infant. Caregiving to the infant is not therapeutic, but has therapeutic value for the optimal growth and development of the infant. It was not the researcher's goal to view the caregiver as a therapist. Through the researcher's training as gestalt play therapist, the researcher could utilize the aspects of gestalt play therapy. From the researcher's background as a therapist, it was important that these caregivers gain knowledge and skills of the developmental phases of the infant, and that they take it into consideration while caring for the infant at his home.

- In chapter five, the empirical findings of this study were processed. Findings were discussed in the focus groups held with the mothers of infants and caregivers for the purpose of developing the programme for in-home care of an infant. The research results were evaluated in accordance with various gestalt therapeutic and play therapeutic techniques and mediums implemented to enhance the caregiver's knowledge and skills. The research methodology used in this study was discussed.

The goal with chapter 5 was to process the empirical findings of this study:

- Phase one of the qualitative part of this study: Findings were discussed in the focus groups held with the mothers of the infants and the caregivers.



- Phase two of the quantitative part of this study: Measuring of the intervention programme was described and discussed.

The researcher used the intervention research model of Rothman and Thomas (D&D model) in the context of applied research. The problematic human condition analyzed in this study was the need for a caregiver to care for an infant at home so that his mother can return to work. This problem was addressed by developing and implementing a social work training programme for the caregiver of an infant, in order to provide in the infant's primary needs and in his growth and development, while caring for him at home.

In order to understand and address the research problem, a literature review was done, and no existing technology was found within the field of social work. The researcher had interviews with twelve working mothers of infants and telephone conversations, personal interviews and contact through the Internet with professional persons. Their experience, knowledge and insight were valuable to the research problem. Literature, resources and functional aids were used to design and develop a training programme for the caregiver of an infant.

For the purposes of this study, the researcher drew three samples from the population in San Bernardino County, California, USA. The researcher used purposive sampling, which is a type of non-probability sampling.

Twelve mothers were selected for two focus groups, and they willingly took part in this research. Two of the mothers were selected to be part of the preliminary research for the purposes of need assessment. The pilot test was conducted in an office building in Chino, which was the same location and circumstances in which the intervention took place.

Ten caregivers were selected in accordance with non-probability snowball sampling. Two of these caregivers willingly participated in the preliminary research, during which the researcher gathered information for developing the training programme. Two caregivers were selected from the group of ten caregivers, to be part of the pilot test for the purpose of needs assessment.

Evaluation of the qualitative findings collected from the focus groups was interpreted in terms of relevant findings and supported by literature. Responses from the mothers and the caregivers were divided into themes and sub-themes according to questions asked during the focus groups.

The mothers were of the opinion that it is the primary task of the caregiver to provide optimal care of the infant. Since they are all working mothers, they expect the caregiver to keep his environment tidy and organized. They also expect the caregiver to give the infant a bath before the mother comes home and

to do the infant's laundry. The programme was developed with these opinions in mind, and therefore the researcher developed a training programme wherein the caregiver can incorporate these mediums and techniques into her day programme.

The qualitative approach gave the researcher the opportunity to compare the information gathered during focus groups with the literature study and from information from interviews with experts. Qualitative data obtained through the focus groups was analyzed according to Tesch's eight-step approach. Analyzing of the data through the use of clustering, coding and categorizing of the information obtained, allowed for accurate conclusions to be drawn. The quantitative approach was used to measure the impact of the training programme on the caregivers. A self-developed questionnaire was pilot-tested and used for evaluation purposes, of the pre-test and the post-test. The researcher used the quasi-experimental one-group pretest-post-test design to measure the dependent variable (knowledge and skills), where no independent variable (training programme) was present, and then an independent variable was introduced. This process was repeated by measuring the dependent variable after intervention had taken place. This design made it possible to measure the level of enhancement of the caregiver's knowledge and skills regarding caregiving to infants. As a result, the independent variable (training programme) had an effect on the dependent variable (knowledge and skills).

The caregivers were actively involved during intervention of this programme, and gained valuable knowledge and skills about optimal caretaking of the infant. They came to the sessions prepared and participated verbally during the sessions. The caregivers eagerly participated in role-play and thus gained practical skills.

In the focus groups, the majority of the mothers were of the opinion that communication between themselves and the caregiver is important. They were concerned about how their infants spend their days as well as about the background of the person to whose care they entrust their infant. Although the mothers wanted to know how their infants would be spending their days, they did not necessarily want to be involved in planning a day programme. They feel strongly about the fact that their caregivers must stimulate their infants in order to grow and develop during these crucial first years. The importance of the safety of the infant was also communicated, and their requirement for the caregivers to give their infants undivided attention.

The mothers communicated their concerns about the emotional state of their infants when they leave for work. They felt that by informing the caregiver about the infant's evening and morning will help her to make contact with him.

A few of the mothers had strong opinions about stimulating the infant's developmental tasks and focusing on achieving their milestones. The mothers were of the opinion that experience and training were equally important, in order to optimally stimulate the infant's growth and development. They realize that it is difficult to find the combination as well as somebody willing to work flexible hours and for a salary they can afford.

All the mothers agreed on this fact, and it seemed that they really made an effort to check and cross-check references. Two of the mothers even had private investigators to make sure that the caregivers were who they appeared to be.

It seems that first impressions were a strong decision point in hiring caregivers. The mothers were of the opinion that if they did not make a connection with the caregiver during their first eye-to-eye contact, they would not consider hiring her.

All the mothers observed the caregivers with their infants prior to leaving them alone together. They wanted to be sure that the caregiver attended to all the infant's needs and knew what their special cues were. Most of the mothers prepared a list of the infant's daily schedules and routines, which they discussed with the caregiver.

Only one mother had a written contract with her caregiver. Most of the mothers experienced difficulties about rules and facts which they had initially agreed upon.

The mothers communicated their concerns about the fact that their caregivers might allow the infants to watch television too much. They expect of the caregivers to be actively involved with the infants and do not want the television to be used as a medium of entertaining or distraction. They also do not want their infants to watch the programmes unsupervised. The caregivers should be present to clarify any concerns or uncertainties.

All of the above information was taken into consideration, and was discussed with the caregivers during the implementing of the training programme. The researcher is of the opinion that support groups will be valuable for both the mothers of infants and caregivers caring for children. Through these support groups, the mothers can voice their concerns and recommendations for optimal caring of their infants. The caregivers, on the other hand, can voice their experienced difficulties and problems about caring for the infant, being unfairly treated, or not being understood by their employees. The mothers and the caregivers should be brought together for the purpose of discussing and resolving these issues in order for the infant to benefit from these constructive sessions.

During focus groups with the caregivers, their opinions were asked about mutual communication between them and the mothers of the infants about caring for the

infants. The conclusion was made that the caregivers want to be appreciated and to feel that they belong.

Most of the caregivers felt that their employees do not really care about them as individuals. The mothers would ask about the infant's day, but they would hardly ever ask how they are doing or if they can be of any help to them. Two caregivers were of the opinion that their employees cared about them and respect the effort they put into their infants. They also feel comfortable to discuss personal problems with their employees, because they know that the mothers will help.

Most of the caregivers were of the opinion that if caring for the infant was their primary task, they would be more creative and involved in the infant's growth and development. The conclusion that the researcher came to was that most of the mothers expected more of the caregivers than caring for their infants. Although they hire caregivers, they expect of them to take care of all aspects of the household as well. Most of the caregivers do not mind to do light housework related to caring of the infant. They do not want to be responsible for housekeeping, however. The researcher came to the conclusion that there are not sufficient training opportunities for the caregiver. After completion of a training programme, the caregiver should qualify with a certificate to prove that she has been adequately trained to care for an infant and to achieve the infant's developmental tasks at home. If the mother is concerned that caretaking of her infant should be the primary task in order for him to grow and develop according to his developmental tasks, then she should not expect of the caregiver to do house chores.

Some caregivers were of the opinion that their employees have high expectations of them, which include taking care of the infants, educating them, as well as doing housework. To try and fit this all in one day, they work within a time schedule. The caregivers were of the opinion that they will not have the time to encourage the infant to independently do age-appropriate chores which will stimulate the developing of his self-esteem.

Most of the caregivers agreed that it is good to praise and encourage the infant for his efforts, since it helps to develop his self-esteem. When they see the excitement when the infant succeeds in his efforts, it makes them feel good as well.

The researcher came to the conclusion that both the mothers and the caregivers communicated the need for a programme that will include developing and stimulating the infant. They suggested a practical "hands on" programme that will be easy to understand and to follow. They also suggested that a programme be developed for daily or weekly activities in the form of a day or week planner.

The caregivers were of the opinion that the programme should include a variety of activities that can easily be used or adjusted as the infant grows and develops. Variety will also provide the caregiver with options according to her preferences, as well as the age and personality of the infant in her care. The programme should be a holistic approach that will address the constructive stimulation of the growth and development of the infant.

The researcher used the single system design to measure the training programme for evaluation purposes. The researcher developed a questionnaire that was used for pre-test and post-test evaluation.

The ten caregivers who willingly participated in this research completed this questionnaire during the first intervention session for the purpose of pre-testing. Intervention followed where the caregivers were trained in accordance with the practical training programme that was developed for the purposes of this study. During the last training session, the caregivers completed the same questionnaire for post-test purposes.

The quantitative approach was followed to measure the impact of the training programme. The questionnaires consisted of six divisions with questions in each division to which the caregivers were asked to give a subjective response.

The first question asked was whether the caregivers had had previous training in childcare, and none of the ten respondents had. During the pre-test, two of the ten caregivers were of the opinion that theoretical and practical training about the growth and development of an infant is necessary in order to be a good caregiver. When completing the same questionnaire for post-test purposes, all ten respondents agreed to the value of theoretical and practical training. The researcher came to the conclusion that the caregivers have insight in the value of gaining knowledge and skills about infancy. They will know how to make contact with the infant on his own level and how to stimulate him on his level through play. Although none of the caregivers had previous training in childcare, they all had practical experience in caring for children for at least six months.

The respondents were given a list of five mediums and asked which of them they thought could stimulate the infant physically. These mediums included looking at pictures and listening to cassettes, listening to music and moving one's body to the beat of the music, playing with clay and dough, eating snacks, and smelling flowers and coffee. The researcher came to the conclusion that the respondents selected activities that initiate physical activity. Through this programme, the respondents developed insight in the importance of stimulating the five senses through the mediums mentioned above, as well as in how to incorporate these mediums into their daily caregiving to the infant at home.

The respondents were asked to indicate, on a success scale, to what extent they thought that, reading books, building puzzles, preparing food, and reading or reciting rhymes can contribute to, and enhance the infant's cognitive development.

The conclusion was made that the caregivers were aware of the value of all the mediums mentioned above, except of preparing food with the infant. The respondents gained knowledge and skills on preparing food with the infant in order to stimulate him as a whole. This medium is not only about the food, but it includes the whole process of planning the meal, preparing the food, and enhancing the infant's self-esteem with the end result.

The respondents were asked to give their opinions on playing a game of "peek-a-boo" and hide-and-seek. There was a sufficient change in the opinions of caregivers, since during the pre-test four (40%) of the respondents indicated that these mediums can stimulate the infant's cognitive development. During the post-test, all 10 (100%) respondents were of the opinion that these mediums can stimulate the infant's cognitive development. The researcher came to the conclusion that these mediums initially were only viewed as leisure activities, and that the caregivers did not view them as mediums that can contribute to the cognitive development of the infant.

The respondents were of the opinion that they had the knowledge and skills to apply most of the techniques and mediums, except for applying hand puppets. By gaining knowledge and skills through actively participating in this programme, they are now able to use hand puppets with the infant in order to stimulate his emotional development.

The respondents were asked whether they thought it is healthy or appropriate for an infant to fantasize. With the pre-test six (60%) of the respondents were of the opinion that it is healthy for an infant to fantasize. When evaluating the same question during the post-test, all 10 (100%) of the respondents indicated "Yes" to this question. They developed insight in the power of the imagination as the infant envisions characters coping with situations similar to his life, which will enhance his social development. Feedback from the caregivers indicated that information and skills they learned about fantasizing were valuable, since they did not know that fantasizing had any value to an infant, and that through applying this medium, the infant can gain valuable socializing skills.

The respondents were asked to indicate on a success scale to what extent they thought that playing pretend play with a toy telephone and playing board games with the infant could contribute to, and enhance the infant's social development. During the pre-test most of caregivers did not view "playing pretend play with a toy telephone" and "playing board games with the infant" as very successful in

developing the infants' social development. During the post-test, all 10 (100%) of the respondents indicated that these mediums are highly successful for social development. They gained insight in the fact that the infant can practice two-way communication and social skills through the use of these of these mediums.

In order to evaluate the respondents' knowledge of, and skills on the infant's self-image, they were asked to indicate on a success scale to what extent they thought that, looking at himself in a mirror, drawing pictures of himself, making music, and playing with sand can contribute to, and enhance, the infant's self-image. During the pre-test the respondents were of the opinion that looking at himself in a mirror can enhance an infant's self-image. The other mediums did not obtain high ratings on the success scale. By gaining knowledge through the programme and practicing skills through role-play, the respondents gained insight in applying these mediums in order to enhance the development of the infant's self-image.

In order to evaluate the caregiver's knowledge and skills on the development of an infant's self-image, they were also asked to give their opinion on whether they thought it is healthy or appropriate for an infant to have a "security blanket" or a favourite toy that he carries around with him. During the pre-test, 50% of the respondents indicated that they thought it was unhealthy. With the post-test, 100% of the caregivers indicated that they were of the opinion that it is healthy and appropriate for an infant to have a "security blanket" or a favourite toy to carry around with him.

The respondents were asked if, when the infant tries to do something by himself, they would do it for him to get it done quicker, tell him to leave it, because he is still too young to be doing it, or praise him for his effort, and encourage him to keep on trying. During evaluation of the responses on the pre-test, seven (70%) respondents indicated they would "do it for the infant to get it done quicker. During evaluation of the post-test, one (10%) was still of the opinion that she would do it for the infant to get it done quicker. Nine (90%) respondents indicated during the post-test that they would "praise the infant for his effort, and encourage him to keep on trying". They gained insight in the fact that doing tasks for the infant will foster dependence. By doing something independently, the infant will experience mastery and control, which will stimulate his self-image.

When comparing the caregivers' responses during the pre-test to their responses on the post-test, the researcher came to the conclusion that the theoretical information and practical skills which they learned through being part of this programme are sufficient to come to a good understanding of the growth and development of an infant.

## 6.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

In consideration of this completed study, the researcher would like to make the following recommendations on micro-level, meso-level and macro-level:

- Implementing of this programme occurred positively and successfully. The infant will gain developmentally and socio-emotionally through the insight, theoretical knowledge and practical skills that the caregivers had developed through being part of this research study.
- This programme, which was developed and implemented for the caregiver of an infant can also be used with the toddler in order to stimulate the essential growth and development tasks. The mediums and techniques included in this training programme can be adapted for the growing infant and toddler years.
- An intervention programme should be developed and implemented with the mothers of infants in light of the following:
  - The researcher is of the opinion that it is essential for the mothers to gain insight, knowledge and skills in stimulating the infant in order for him to optimally achieve his developmental tasks.
  - It is also important for the mother to come to an understanding of the caregiver's tasks, roles and responsibility.
  - Regular and efficient communication between the mother and the caregiver is necessary, since it has a direct influence on the quality of the care which the infant will receive.
- Training programmes should be implemented in group settings. The respondents will learn from each other through active verbal participation, in light of the following:
  - During these programmes, the caregivers should have an opportunity for ventilation, where they can learn from each other. The focus should be on experiencing the tasks and roles of caregiving as positive. Advice should be given on how to positively and constructively communicate to the mother of the infant in order for the infant to benefit from the caring relationship.
  - Support groups should be formed with the aim of a learning experience.



- Advanced programmes for caretaking should be developed and implemented for the purpose of ongoing training in the development and development tasks of the growing and developing child.
- The training programme that was developed for the purposes of this study can be used by social workers for the training of caregivers. New technology was developed in the form of a complete practical training programme with various gestalt and play therapy techniques and mediums. The techniques and mediums can be adapted in accordance with the developmental level and emotional state of the infant. They can also be adapted according to the caregiver's preference and situation.

**As a recommendation for further research, the following hypotheses are formulated:**

If a caregiver becomes part of a support/training group, it can lead to a positive attitude towards caring for the infant at home.

If mothers become part of a training group for caregivers, they will understand the needs of the infant and the needs of the caregiver.

**As a recommendation for further research, the following statement can be formulated:**

Caregivers who participate in advance in a caregiving programme could be better equipped for caring of infants as a primary task.

## **6.7 FINAL CONCLUSION**

The conclusions and recommendations of this research study were discussed in this chapter, according to the process that was followed in developing and implementing the training programme for optimal caretaking of the infant in his own home. This programme can be used as is or can be adapted as a guideline for training caregivers to care for a child (infant or toddler) at home. This programme can be refined and expanded when implementing it with different focus groups (mothers or grandparents) and by implementing it with children in different life stages.

The researcher would like to complete this research with a thought by Oaklander (1988:324):

*Children are our finest teachers.  
"They already know how to grow, how to develop,*

*how to learn, how to expand and discover,  
how to feel, laugh and cry and get mad,  
what is right for them and what is not right for them,  
what they need.*

*They already know how to love and be joyful  
and to live life at its fullest,  
to work and to be strong and full of energy.  
All they (and the children within us)  
need is the space to do it."*