THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE QUALITY OF

PARENTING SKILLS AND

THE VULNERABILITY OF CHILDREN TO SEXUAL ABUSE

BY

GLORIA TSAKANI BANDI

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DEDICATED TO:

ALL THE CHILDREN OF SOUTH AFRICA WHO HAVE BEEN VICTIMS

OF SEXUAL ABUSE

AND

SURVIVORS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE WHO

SHARED THEIR LIFE STORIES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SUMMARY

The relationship between the quality of parenting skills and the vulnerability of children to sexual abuse

By

GLORIA TSAKANI BANDI

Study Leader	**:**	**Dr GM Spies**
		Department of Social Work
		University of Pretoria
Degree	**:**	**MSD (Play Therapy)**

Children are vulnerable to sexual abuse while under the care and custody of their parents or caregivers for a number of reasons. Very often people ask the question of how does it happens that a child is been sexually abused in the care of responsible people and not protected against it. The vulnerability of children to be sexually abused can be minimised by caring and protective parents who are able to ensure that their children's emotional needs, is been met. On the other hand children's vulnerability to sexual abuse, can be increased by parents who are not emotional available or able to nurture their children.

The goal of this study was to explore the relation between the quality of parenting skills and the vulnerability of children to sexual abuse. The researcher conducted a qualitative study through which the goal of this study is been achieved.

Further research in this field is recommended to prevent sexual abuse of children.

OPSOMMING

Die verhouding tussen die kwaliteit van ouerskapvaardighede en die kwesbaarheid van kinders tot seksuele molestering

Deur

GLORIA TSAKANI BANDI

Studieleier   :   Dr GM Spies

Departement Maatskaplike Werk

Universiteit van Pretoria

Graad   :   MSD (Spelterapie)

Kinders is vir verskillende redes kwesbaar tot die blootstelling aan seksuele molestering terwyl hulle in die bewaring en toesig van hulle ouers en ander versorgers verkeer. Dikwels word navraag gedoen na die redes waarom kinders in die sorg van verantwoordelike persone seksueel gemolesteer word en hierdie persone nie daartoe in staat is om hierdie kinders daarteen te beskerm nie. Die kwesbaarheid van kinders tot seksuele molestering kan egter beperk word deur ouers wat daartoe in staat is om in hulle kinders se emosionele behoeftes te voorsien.

Die doel van hierdie studie was om die verhouding tussen die kwaliteit van ouerskapvaardighede en die kwesbaarheid tot seksuele molestering, te eksploreer. Die navorser het 'n kwalitatiewe studie gedoen waartydens die doel van die studie bereik is.

Verdere navorsing in hierdie veld word aanbeveel om seksuele molestering te voorkom.

KEY CONCEPTS

Sexual abuse

Quality

Parenting skills

Vulnerability

Caring

Custody

Emotional needs

KERNBEGRIPPE

Seksuele molestering

Kwaliteit

Ouerskapvaardighede

Kwesbaarheid

Bewaring

Toesig

Emosionele behoeftes

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

1. INTRODUCTION

The sexual abuse of women and children is as old as the creation of mankind. Biblical and war stories also attest to this statement. When wars were fought, women were part of the plunder, and stories of how they were sexually abused were recorded in documentaries. Although its presence has been noted throughout history, society has universally failed to acknowledge it as a social problem. McCreave (1996:4-5) highlights the fact that by its failure to acknowledge sexual abuse as a social problem, the society tends to put the blame upon the victim rather than look for other possible explanations for the escalating sexual abuse of children. By finding a scapegoat, society is protected from accepting responsibility of its problems. That children are victims of sexual abuse both within the so-called safety of their own homes and outside their homes is a fact. Parents are morally and legally regarded as guardians and protectors of these children. The question that is posed is that if they are the protectors of the children, why are children still vulnerable to sexual abuse? Another question relates to whether or not some children raised by these parents are more vulnerable to sexual abuse. Through this study, the researcher seeks to find out if there is a relationship between the quality of parenting and the vulnerability of a particular child to sexual abuse.

2. MOTIVATION

The researcher has rendered social services to many children who were sexually abused in her eleven (11) years of experience as a social worker in three (3) different offices of the Department of Health and Welfare. The observation made by the researcher is that young children are not necessarily safe whether parents are present or not. Currently children are sexually abused in their parent's physical presence and nothing is being done to protect the young child from both the present and future abuse.

This observation motivated the researcher to investigate through an empirical study whether or not parents contribute to the vulnerability of their children to sexual abuse. If this question can be answered, programs can be developed to support parents in their responsibilities to protect their children against sexual abuse.

3. PROBLEMFORMULATION

The area that was allocated to the researcher falls under Hlanganani Magisterial district of the Limpopo province and has a high prevalence of sexually abused children. The children are sexually abused both within their families by people they know and trust and outside their families by people they either know or do not know. The researcher would like to explore what role, if any, parents play that can contribute to the increased vulnerability of these children to sexual abuse. The latter implies that children are sexually abused in the custody of their parents where they ought to be safe.

Statistics gathered by the Louis Trichardt Child Protection Unit reflects reported cases for the years 1999-2001 as follows: in 1999: 242 cases, in 2000:183 cases and in 2001: 180 cases. Louis Trichardt Child Protection Unit renders services for the policing of areas including Magistrate Hlanganani. Jurgens (2002:1) reports that of the 786 cases of rape and assault treated by the trauma center attached to Tshilidzini Hospital, 289 were those of children. Statistics for Hlanganani area were not available. However, the statistics cited reflect the gravity of the problem.

4. AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

4.1 AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study is to explore if there is a relationship between the quality of parenting and a child 's vulnerability to sexual abuse.

4.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

De Vos, Schurink and Strydom (1998:7) conclude that research objectives are the steps to be taken, one by one, realistically at grassroots level, within a certain time span, in order to achieve one's overall aim. In the case of this study, the objectives can be described as follows:

4.2.1 LITERATURE STUDY

Literature study will be conducted to build up a knowledge base regarding the following:

- The dynamics of child sexual abuse.
- The dynamics of parenting as a process.

4.2.2 EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

An empirical investigation will be launched in order to:

- Explore the role the quality of parenting skills can play in the increasing of the vulnerability of young children, which may lead to the exposure to sexual abuse.
- Formulate conclusions and recommendations based on the study.

5. PROBLEMSTATEMENT

There is too little information and research available that clearly depicts the possible relationship between the quality of parenting and the child's exposure to sexual abuse. The problem statement therefore is as follows:

> *"The quality of parenting skills may contribute to the vulnerability of children that can expose them to sexual abuse."*

6. RESEARCH APPROACH

This research will be **a** qualitative study. Schurink (1998: *241-3)* describes qualitative research as aiming to understand social life and the meaning people attach to everyday life. It is regarded as a subjective exploration of reality from the perspective of the insider. Taylor *(1993:53)* describes qualitative research as a naturalistic research approach whereby the researcher studies the facts of nature as they occur under natural conditions. Leedy and Ormrod (2001:147) state that qualitative research aims to study the phenomenon as it occurs in natural settings in all its complexity in order to reveal and understand the many truths about a phenomenon. From the above definitions, the researcher concludes that through qualitative research, one studies social life or a phenomenon as it occurs in daily life, prescribed by the subjects themselves.

Through this study the researcher seeks to interview the subjects in their natural settings (homes) about the phenomenon of sexual abuse and how some factors in parenting can play a role in the child's vulnerability to sexual abuse. Since there is limited information and research in this field, the research findings or interpretations will give the researcher more insight about the process of parenting as it relates to the phenomenon of child sexual abuse. At this point the researcher is not really interested in how many children were sexually abused due to quality of parenting skills. The concern focus is rather on the understanding of the possible link between the quality of parenting and child sexual abuse. The findings of this study will be presented in words since De Vos (1998:15) states that qualitative research deals with data that is principally verbal and not strictly formalized.

7. TYPE OF RESEARCH

The researcher will make use of applied research **in** the study. De Vos, Schurink and Strydom (1998:8) state that applied research addresses immediate problems facing the professional in practice. The goal is the scientific planning of induced change in a troublesome situation. Grinell, Rothery and Thomlison (1993:15) are of the opinion that applied research is conducted out of curiosity about a situation done with an aim of generating information or knowledge that can be applied practically to situations in order to change them.

De Vos and Fouché (1998:80) state that applied research aims to make qualitative research more humanistic and relevant to the lives of the people with some sort of social change intended. Human beings are seen as capable to create their own reality, and data are thus collected in cooperation with the research participants who are empowered by the researcher to undertake their own research. From these definitions, applied research refers to the full involvement of the subjects of research in finding meaning about a particular phenomenon or problematic situation that affects them and allowing them to seek possible solutions towards the intended social change.

8. RESEARCH DESIGN

Thyer *(1993:94)* defines **a** research design as a blueprint or a detailed plan for how a research study is to be conducted- operationalising variables so they can be measured, selecting a sample of interest to study, collecting data to be used as a basis for testing hypotheses and analyzing the results. Bless and Higson-Smith *(1995:63)* describe a research design as the planning of any scientific research from the first to the last step. It is a programme to guide the researcher in collecting, analyzing and interpreting observed facts.

For the purposes of this study, the student will adopt an exploratory type of research design. Bless and Higson Smith **(1995:42)** explain that the purpose of an exploratory research is to gain insight into a situation, phenomenon, person or community.

Grinnell (1993:119) describes exploratory designs as per-experimental or non-experimental as they only explore the research question or problem area. Their purpose is not to produce statistical data but to build a foundation of general ideas and tentative theories that can be explored later with more precise and complex research designs. Thus through this study the researcher aims to explore the link between parenting and child sexual abuse. The findings thereof will add to the knowledge base of what is known about the phenomenon of child sexual abuse.

9.   RESEARCH   PROCEDURES   AND STRATEGY

9.1 RESEARCH PROCEDURES

The researcher will use two (2) different semi-structured interview schedules for both children and parents/caregivers as respondents. De Vos (1998:99) describes an unstructured interview with a schedule as a form of exploratory research since it is a guideline that contains all relevant questions and themes that the researcher should ask in each interview (compare Bless and Higson-Smith, 1995:107 and Grinell, 1993:269-270). Bless and Higson-Smith (1995:107) are of the idea that the semi-structured interview method is more useful where there is no need to make comparisons between the responses made by the different subjects. The welfare records of the five (5) welfare offices will be used in order to isolate the population needed for the study.

9.2 STRATEGY

The researcher will compile a full list of reported cases of child sexual abuse from the five welfare offices under the jurisdiction of Hlanganani Magisterial District. Three of these offices have been served by the researcher from 1989 to 2001. Since the children seen were from various areas, the following will be done:

- Drawing a list for the five areas falling under the jurisdiction of Hlanganani District of the Limpopo Province.
- The children and their parents will be interviewed in a setting where they feel the most comfortable.

10. PILOT STUDY

Bless and Higson-Smith (1995:43) state that a pilot study is used to assess the feasibility of a research project, the practical possibilities to carry it out, the correctness of some concepts, and the adequacy of the method and instrument of measurement. Bless and Higson-Smith (1995:50) further state that a pilot study involves testing the actual program on a small sample taken from the community for whom the program is planned. Huysamen in Strydom (1998:205) states

conducting a pilot study allows the evaluator to identify any difficulty with the method or materials and to investigate the accuracy and appropriateness of any instrument that has been developed.

From the above definitions, the researcher deduces that a pilot study is done with only a few subjects who possess similar characteristics as the subjects to be involved in the main study. The main aim of doing this preliminary or mock research is to check if the research instrument, methods and all practical elements of the research are correct or need adjustment just to ensure that the research will be fully carried out.

10.1 LITERATURE STUDY

Strydom (1998:179-180) states that literature study makes the researcher up to date with existing knowledge on his proposed study. Bless and Higson-Smith (1995:22-5) describe the purpose of the literature study as follows:

- Sharpen and deepen the theoretical framework of research.
- Familiarize the researcher with the latest developments in the area of research as well as related areas.
- Allows the researcher to be acquainted with the problems, hypotheses, and results obtained by previous research in order not to duplicate efforts.
- Discover connections, analogies or other relations between different research results by comparing various investigations.
- Identify gaps in knowledge, as well as weaknesses in previous research.
- To study the definitions used in previous works as well as the characteristics of the populations investigated with the aim of adopting them for the new research.
- Study the advantages and disadvantages of the research methods.

From the above definitions or descriptions of the literature study, the researcher is of the opinion that the literature study is intended to heighten the awareness or sensitiveness of the researcher into the field of the proposed study.

The researcher has undertaken an in-depth study on available literature on the two important

variables of this study, namely, child sexual abuse and parenting. The literature search was mainly at the Academic Information Service Centre of the University of Pretoria. Both local and international databases were used. Newspapers, journal articles and magazines were reviewed on the topic. From literature review, it becomes apparent that researchers in different professional fields such as psychology, medicine, social work, paediatrics and education are all intrigued by the involvement of parent figures in the child's life. Researchers point out that parental absence or non-involvement in the child's developmental milestones, has a detrimental effect on the child's life. As much as literature is available on child sexual abuse as a phenomenon, and parenting as a process, there is very little research or information that specifically addresses the possible link between the quality of parenting skills and the children's exposure and vulnerability to sexual abuse (compare Browne and Finkelhor, 1986:66-77; Louw, van Ede, and Louw, 1998:310-18). Kindra and Gabrielse (2002:3) reveal the findings of an inter-departmental management task team, that was mandated to develop an anti-rape strategy. The study reveals that a horrifying 40% of all reported rapes in South Africa are child rapes. Out of the *52957* rapes reported in the year 2000, 21630 were cases reported by children under the age of eighteen (18) years. Browne and Finkelhor (1986:70) affirm that women who have been sexually victimized as children, report problems in relating to both men and women, continuing problems with their parents and difficulty in parenting and responding to their own children.

10.2 CONSULTATION WITH EXPERTS

Experts were consulted by the researcher as preparation to the study. The main purpose was to get practical inputs and challenges faced by practitioners within the field of child sexual abuse. The information shared, will be used to confirm or reject the statement of assumption made that there is a possible relationship between child sexual abuse and the quality of parenting. The following experts were consulted:

- Ms Geimina Mabogo, a chief social worker at Makwarela Welfare Office in Sibasa was consulted. She shared her experiences of group work and play therapy with uncontrollable children. She has proven beyond doubt that parenting skills played a role in the behavior of these children. She also added that she found out that most of those children were victims of sexual abuse although this was not the presented problem. She

also assisted with literature on sexual   abuse. Ms Mabogo holds a Masters degree in Social Work and her study theme for research was in Family Therapy. She is currently busy with her Doctorate studies in social work, looking into collaboration of professionals in Child Care issues. She is also a Part-time lecturer in the Department of Social work at the University of Venda.

- Inspector S. Mawila, a police officer attached to the Child Protection Unit of Louis Trichardt South African Police Services, is of the opinion that there is a strong relationship between child sexual abuse and parenting. He indicated that in his experience as a child protection officer and investigator, he has realized that parents contribute to the exposure of their children in more than one way. Firstly, young children are sent to shops alone in the evenings. Whatever happens to the child on that trip is not a concern of the parent. Secondly, the poverty and negligence experienced by children in families, force them into prostitution and sex rings. Due to minimal availability of the parent, the abuse is usually reported long after it has occurred. Thirdly, in cases of incest, mothers usually cover up and deny the existence of abuse. It is mostly neighbours who will report the suspicion of sexual abuse. He pointed out that the most prevalent factors associated with child sexual abuse are culture, extended family setups where children have been left on their own, families where parents are working far away from home, and the mother's live-in boyfriend.

- Superintendent C. van Zyl of the provincial Child Protection Unit in the Limpopo Province stated that in her investigation experience, she has found no relationship between parenting and the child's exposure to sexual abuse.

10.3 FEASIBILITY OF THE STUDY

The researcher has identified the following factors as the ones that will contribute to the success of this study:

- The respondents will be drawn from existing clients of the welfare offices.
- The researcher can reach the respondents with ease.

- The respondents will be interviewed   outside office hours and within their homes if this does not pose any threat to them.
- Permission will be sought from parents and children.
- The researcher will bear all research cost.

Problems anticipated in this study are as follows:

- Parents may refuse to participate in the research due to its sensitive nature.
- Some children and their parents may not be available due to relocation or any other reason.

10.4 PRE-TEST OF THE MEASURING INSTRUMENT

Mindel (1993:238-40) states that the measuring instrument should be evaluated before it is administered to a sample of individuals, who are similar to the study's sample or population, to determine whether individuals asked to answer the questions, understand them the way the researcher intends them to. This exercise will give the respondents an opportunity to discuss with the researcher their opinion about the instrument and what kind of problems they experience with it (compare Leedy and Ormrod, 2001:98-9).

The interview schedule as a research instrument, will be tested amongst at least five respondents who are not part of the study before administering it to the larger sample.

11.   DESCRIPTION OF THE POPULATION, DELIMITATION AND SAMPLING METHODS

11.l POPULATION

Bless and Higson-Smith *(1995:85-7)* define a population as the entire set of objects and events or group of people which are the object of research and about which the researcher wants to determine some characteristics. Strydom and De Vos (1998: 190) describe a population as a way of setting boundaries on the study units. It also refers to individuals in the universe who possess specific characteristics.Grinnell (1993: 446) defines a population as an entire set or universe, of people, objects or events of concern to a research study from which a sample is selected.

From the above definitions, the researcher deduces that a population refers to a group of people who possesses the same characteristics that are of interest to the researcher of any particular study.

11.2   DELIMITATIONS

For the purposes of this study, the target group will be all children who were reported to be sexually abused in welfare offices, falling under the jurisdiction of Hlanganani Magistrate in the Limpopo province, namely, Elim Hospital, Waterval, Bungeni, Majosi and Tiyani. The children's parents will also be interviewed for more information on parenting and its relationship to sexual abuse. The children to be interviewed, should have been between six (6) and eighteen (18) years of age when the abuse was reported. The research may take a maximum of six (6) months to complete starting from December 2002 to October *2003.*

11.3 SAMPLING METHODS

For the purpose of this study, the researcher will use probability sampling. Seaburg (in Strydom and De Vos, 1998:195) defines probability sampling as a sample in which each person in the population has the same known probability of being selected based on some random procedure. The best known kinds of probability sampling are simple random sampling, systematic sampling, stratified sampling, cluster sampling and panel sampling (compare Bless and Higson-Smith, 1995:88 and Gabor, 1993:157-162.)

Bless and Higson-Smith (1995:64) describe the unit of analysis as the persons or object from which the researcher collects the data. For purposes of this study, the unit of analysis will be twelve (12) black families in the five areas, whose children were reported to be sexually abused. The interviews will be with both the parents and the children.

Arkava and Lane (in Strydom and De Vos, 1998:191) describe a sample as the element of the population considered for actual inclusion in the study or a subset of measurements drawn from a population in which we are interested. The student will only use families whose children were reported as having been sexually abused.

The sampling method that will be used for this study is a stratified random sampling procedure. Stratified random sampling is described as a method of sampling whereby the universe or population is divided into different strata or groups which are mutually exclusive and then the desired number of respondents is then selected within each of the different strata through random sampling (compare De Vos, 1998:197 and Bless and Higson-Smith, 1995:91). All children aged between six (6) to eighteen (18) years of age will have equal chances of being selected since they will be included in the lists falling under each of the five welfare offices.

12. ETHICAL ASPECTS

Strydom (1998:24) points out that ethical guidelines are essential **in** research since they serve as standards and the basis upon which each researcher ought to continuously evaluate his or her own conduct. Strydom (1998:24-34) identifies several ethical issues that need to be considered if research is to be undertaken (compare Leedy and Ormrod, 2001:107-8.)

12.1   Harm to subjects

There is no known medical risk associated with this study. The subjects may experience stress when being interviewed because of the emotional or sensitive nature of the study. To ensure that stress is minimized, the researcher will ensure that subjects' stress is acknowledged and the pace of the interview be controlled by how the subjects can handle the stress involved.

12.2   lnformed consent

The researcher will obtain written consent from the subjects. Since both children and their parents will be interviewed, written consent of the parents as well as the children, will be obtained. The respondents will only sign the consent forms after a detailed explanation has been given about the purpose or goal of the study, data collection strategies, credibility of the researcher and how the research findings will be used. In the case where the respondents are not able to read or write, the consent forms will be explained in full to them.

12.3 Deception of subjects

The subjects on this study will be given a fair or detailed explanation of what the research aims to achieve through their involvement to alleviate any fears that the subjects may have.

12.4 Violation of privacy

Due to the sensitive nature of the investigation, the anonymity of the subjects will be ensured by not disclosing their identities. All information gathered will be dealt with in confidence.

12.5 Release of findings

The results of the research will be made available to the subjects on request.

12.6 Restoration of subjects

The researcher will offer a debriefing session after the data collection phase, if required by them.

13. DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

For the purposes of this study, the researcher will define the following concepts:

13.1 PARENT

Hawkins (1996:315) in The South African Oxford School Dictionary defines a **parent** as a father or mother of a person or animal. For purposes of this study the concept parent will refer to a father or mother of a person and it will include stepparents, adoptive parents, foster parents and any adult who finds him/herself acting in a position of a parent at a particular moment.

13.2 PARENTING

Louw, Van Ede and Louw (1998:35 1) describe **parenting** as a way in which parents bring up

their children. For purposes of this study this   definition will be adopted.

13.3 VULNERABLE

The South African Oxford School Dictionary (1996:50)) defines the word vulnerable as being not well protected or that which is able to be easily attacked. Thus the state of vulnerability refers to the exposure to attack or danger, which includes the exposure to being sexually abused.

13.4 CHILD

In terms of the Child Care Act, 1983(Act no.74 of 1983), a child is any person who is below the age of 18 years. Doyle (1994:4) defines a child as a child in character, manners, attainments and especially in experience and judgement. For the researcher and for purposes of this study, a child will refer to someone below the age of 18 years and whose experience and judgement is not yet matured.

13.5   SEXUAL ABUSE

The National Legal Resource Centre for Child Advocacy and Protection (in Haugard and Reppucci, 1988:17) defines sexual abuse as an act that is generally perpetrated by an adult the child knows most often a parent, guardian or a person with authority over a child and generally has no commercial element.

Schechter and Roberge (in Doyle, 1994:8-9) define child sexual abuse as "the involvement of dependent, developmentally immature children and adolescents in sexual activities that they do not truly comprehend, to which they are unable to give informed consent, or that violate the social taboos of family roles".

Veltkamp and Miller (1994:27) state that sexual abuse includes any contact or interactions between a child and an adult in which the child is sexually stimulated or is being used for the sexual stimulation and gratification of the perpetrator or another person.

From the definitions cited above, the researcher comes to the conclusion that sexual abuse refers to the following: any contact or interactions between a child and an adult or someone in position of authority that involves sexual stimulation and gratification of an adult. Although the child is involved, he or she is not yet developmentally mature to understand the meaning of the sexual experience or interaction or to give informed consent.

14. CONTENTS OF THE RESEARCH REPORT

The research report will be presented in the following format:

- Chapter 1 – Introduction to the study.
- Chapter 2 – The experiences of Sexually abused children.
- Chapter 3 - Parenting.
- Chapter 4 - Empirical study.
- Chapter 5 - Conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER 2

THE EXPERIENCES OF THE SEXUALLY ABUSED CHILD

1. INTRODUCTION

The incidence of child sexual abuse is a social problem throughout the world. Daily reports from media and hearsay indicate how children as young as eight (8) months old are vulnerable to sexual abuse. The Child Protection Units have been set up nationally to address crimes committed against children. Pienaar (2000: 22) shared statistics for the Pretoria area as from 1994-1998 and indicated that rape increased from 7559 in 1994 to 15 732 in 1998, sodomy increased from 491 in 1994 to 739 in 1998, incest increased from *156* to 185 and indecent assault decreased from 3904 to 3744 during the same period. The statistics reflected above are just an indication of how serious the incidence of sexual abuse is though it is just a drop in the ocean.

In this chapter, the researcher will look into the following aspects:

- Defining the concepts 'Child' and 'Sexual abuse'.
- Forms of Sexual Abuse.
- Processes of Sexual Abuse.
- Settings for sexual abuse.
- Sexual Abuse as a Traumatic Experience (Effects).
- The Statutory Process.
- The healing process of a sexually abused child.

2. DEFINITION OF THE CONCEPT 'CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE'

Glaser and Frosh (1993:4) indicate that it appears that there is no universal definition of child sexual abuse although there are many ad hoc formulations and operational guidelines. This

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opinion, is shared by the American Psychological Association (1999:1). Newton (2001:1) and Lown (2001:1) indicate that the definition of child sexual abuse will also vary from state to state. Despite the inherent differences in definitions of child sexual abuse, the definitions will include some of these clear specifications:

- What is meant by the concept sexual.
- The developmental level of the participants.
- The activity experienced by the child.
- The elements, which make it abusive.
- Social norms.
- The child's inability to consent to sexual contact.
- The relationship between the offender and the child.

In terms of the Child Care Act, 1983 (Act No.74 of 1983) a child is any person who is below the age of 18 years.

Doyle (1994:4) defines a child as a child in character, manners, attainments, and especially in experience and judgement. In terms of these definitions, the researcher concludes that a child is any person under the age of eighteen (l 8) years who is not mature in terms of experience and making sound judgements.

The National Legal Resource Centre for Child Advocacy and Protection in Haugaard and Repucci (1998:17) define sexual abuse as an act that is generally perpetrated by an adult the child knows, most often a parent, guardian, or a person with authority over a child, and that generally has no commercial element.

Schechter and Roberge in Doyle (1994:8-9) define child sexual abuse as "the involvement of dependent, developmentally immature children and adolescents in sexual activities that they do not truly comprehend, to which they are unable to give informed consent, or that violate the social taboos of family roles". For the researcher child sexual abuse is an act whereby an adult takes advantage of the children's ignorance about sexual matters, vulnerability in terms of

depending on the perpetrator for care, children's inability to protect themselves and the deliberate abandonment of values and morals that society has laid down to regulate our sexual behaviour.

The Standing Committee on the Sexual Abuse of Children in Doyle (1994:9) states that "any child below the age of consent may be deemed to have been sexually abused when a sexually mature person has by design or neglect of their usual societal or specific responsibilities in relation to the child, engaged or permitted the engagement of that child in any activity of a sexual nature which is intended to lead to the sexual gratification of the sexually mature person".

Veltkamp and Miller (1994:27) state that sexual abuse includes any contact or interactions between a child and an adult in which the child is sexually stimulated or is being used for the sexual stimulation of the perpetrator or another person. This definition of child sexual abuse is supported by Whealin (2002:1).

According to Newton (2001:1), child sexual abuse is defined as "contacts or interactions between a child and an adult when the child is being used for sexual stimulation of the perpetrator or another person when the perpetrator or another person is in a position of power or control over the victim".

From the definitions cited above, the researcher comes to the conclusion that sexual abuse refers to the following:

- Any contact or interaction between a child and an adult or some one in a position of authority or control over the child.
- The perpetrators by design or neglect abdicates or violates societal responsibilities they have towards the child in favour of the sexual gratification.
- The contact involves sexual stimulation of a child or the sexual stimulation and gratification of an adult.
- The child although involved, is not developmentally mature to understand the meaning of the sexual interaction.
- Although involved, the child cannot give informed consent.

- Sexual abuse does not fit in any developmental stage of a child.

3. FORMS OF SEXUAL ABUSE

Literature studies reveal that the incidence of child sexual abuse occurs in different ways and in a wide variety of contexts. The perpetrators can be male or female. They can work alone, in pairs or in groups. They can be family members, distant acquaintances or strangers (Doyle, 1993:16).

The Child Abuse (online) highlights that there are many forms of child sexual abuse and they occur under a multitude of circumstances. The incidence and forms of this phenomenon of child sexual abuse does not fall into any one social class, professional occupation or ethnic group but can be referred to in categories such as mild or moderate. This will involve looking at whether there was sexual penetration or not, the frequency of the abuse and the duration and the relationship between the abuser and the child.

There are generally two main forms of sexual abuse. Doyle (1994:20-28) and Glaser and Frosh (1993: 18) state that sexual abuse can be categorized as touching (contact) and non-touching (non-contact). Whealin (2002:1) states that behaviours that are sexually abusive often involve bodily contact such as sexual kissing, touching, fondling of genitals, oral, anal and vaginal intercourse. According to the author, some behaviour may be sexually abusive even when there is no contact such as in the case of genital exposure (flashing), verbal pressure for sex, and sexual exploitation for purposes of prostitution or pornography. Csuhayward (unknown: 1-2) adds that sexual abuse includes fondling a child's genitals, intercourse, incest, rape, sodomy, exhibitionism and sexual gratification. The American Psychological Association (2001:1) and Newton (2001:1) provide an additional list of sexually abusive behaviour to include acts such as masturbation, oral-genital contact, having sex in front of a child, showing x-rated books or movies to a child, using a child in pornographic production of any kind and digital penetration.

The researcher is of the opinion that the form of sexual abuse used by the perpetrator will depend on the craftiness, perverseness and the outcomes that the perpetrator hopes to achieve through the act. The perpetrator may, for example, do photo shooting or video recording if the purpose is

commercial or flash his genitals if the intention is to arouse sexual feelings in himself or the victim. The table below will illustrate the two types of sexual abuse as proposed by Doyle.

Table 1: TYPES OF SEXUAL ABUSE

SEXUAL ABUSE WITH CONTACT	SEXUAL ABUSE WITHOUT CONTACT
Fondling	Voyeurism
Masturbation	Exhibitionism
Frottage	Pornography
Bondage	Verbal abuse
Simulated intercourse	
Penetration	
Flagellation	
Oral sex	

(Doyle, 1994:20-28)

For the researcher, whether sexual abuse is through contact or non-contact, it leaves the child confused, in conflict with the self and others and not sure how to deal with the experience. The effect of the abuse stays the same whether it was contact or non-contact in nature. Wieland in Potgieter (2000: 34) confirms the experience of the sexually abused child as that the perpetrator is progressively grooming the child and progressively gains access to the layers of boundaries the child has. The child may have no cognitive recognition of the intrusion but will experience both emotional and physical intrusion and may experience it as a "yucky" feeling or a feeling of being damaged. The effects of child sexual abuse will later be discussed in this chapter.

4. SETTINGS FOR SEXUAL ABUSE

Doyle (1994:28) states that there are a considerable number of settings in which child sexual abuse can take place such as within the family, community as well as in institutional settings by known and unknown perpetrators. There are general observations, understanding and conclusions amongst different authors (Compare Interpol, 2003:1; Doyle, 1994: 28; Csuhayward,

unknown: 2; Newton, 2001:1-2 and Scheepers, 1994:9) about the settings of sexual abuse. The perpetrators are mostly adults who are known and to some extent trusted by the children and their parents, who are in positions of some type of authority or influence such as parents, relatives, teachers, foster parents, baby sitters and boarding masters.

Glaser and Frosh (1993:16) state that children are generally not safe with supposedly safe people and in supposedly safe places. The perpetrators also have a responsibility of buying time through the grooming process to make sure that the children ultimately put their trust in them (compare Potgieter, 2000: 34; Burgess, 1992:117-8 and Doyle, 1993:24-5). The settings of sexual abuse will be discussed below:

4.1 FAMILY SETTINGS

Within family settings, children are abused by blood relatives such as parents, siblings, uncles, aunts, grandparents and cousins. These relatives may even live in the family home. At times, children are abused by non-relatives who are staying with the family in one house. This includes the parent's cohabitee, foster parents, lodgers and baby sitters. Most of the time, children prefer not to disclose the abuse at an early stage if it takes place in the family system, because of the possibility that the family can disintegrate.

4.2 NEIGHBOURHOOD AND COMMUNITY SETTINGS

Doyle (1994:32-4) indicates that children may be sexually abused by strangers or acquaintances, neighbours or someone trusted in the community such as teachers and clergymen. Interpol (2003:1) and Doyle (1994:34) agree that a considerable number of sex offenders may spend a significant period of their lifetime infiltrating organizations or seeking opportunities to work with children or to work in professions that afford them substantial access to children and young persons. They generally gain a position of trust in the community and therefore have a legitimate reason for befriending children.

Burgess (1992:117-8) highlights that the potential child victim will be targeted from places

where they usually assemble such as a park, a shopping mall and bus stations (Doyle, 1994:33) Doyle specifically indicates how strangers become sexual abusers. Strangers may abuse children in a semi-public place such as a corner of a park. When the targeted victim is approached, the main aim is to gather basic information about the child. This will give a clue to the perpetrator about the vulnerability of the child and the nurturance received by the child. The prospective abuser may flirt or be friendly depending on what approach the child responds to. Depending on the child's pressing needs, the abuser will then try to satisfy the child's needs to earn the child's trust. The following children can be potential victims of sexual abuse:

- Children who have run away from home.
- Lonely children.
- Children who have a low or negative self-image.
- Rebellious children who rebel against the restrictions from home and school (Burgess 1992:118).

The researcher is of the opinion that homeless children are also a potential high-risk group to be victimized because they are vulnerable in terms of physical and emotional care that they lack and hunger for. The fact that they do not have a home makes them vulnerable to become victims of being ritually murdered, sexually abused, and to be enticed into different levels of crimes in order to earn food, housing or an income. This opinion is supported by Lown (2001:2) when he states that children become easy victims because they are easily influenced by adults, are naturally trusting and curious, and enjoy the affection and attention of adults.

4.3 RITUAL AND ORGANIZED CRIME

McFadyen, Hanks and James (Doyle, 1994:35) refer to ritual and organized crime as the involvement of children in physical, psychological, or sexual abuse associated with repeated activities which purport to relate the abuse to the context of religious, magical and supernatural acts. Burgess in Conradie (2001:1-2) describes sex rings as the involvement of one or more adults with more than one child. This ritual involves the recruitment and networking of these victims. Children may become involved in these sex rings for the following reasons:

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- Incest victims may have run away from home and need a peer group for identity and economic support.

- Abused children from disorganized families in which parental bonding has been absent and multiple neglect and abuse are present.

- Missing children who have been abducted or kidnapped and forced into prostitution. (Catanach, 1992:137-8).

4.4 INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE

Sexual abuse may also occur in institutions where one ought to be protected and safe (Compare Doyle, 1994: 38-9, Glaser and Frosh, 1993: 16 and Catanach, 1992:131-8). Institutions referred to may include places of safety, children's homes and reform schools. These institutions are legally there for the protection of the children but children find themselves trapped and vulnerable to be abused sexually by the people (staff) who ought to be protecting them.

Doyle (1994:39-40) is of the opinion that children in these establishments are particularly vulnerable because of the nature of these institutions and because the children are emotionally isolated. The children have little control over their lives, little autonomy and few choices over what to wear, when to watch television and when to go to bed. Obedience and compliance to a variety of adults is expected. The children are sometimes objectified by the system to such an extent that they lose their individuality. For the researcher, the child in an institution does not have much opportunity to develop the self and to make informed choices because if the child chooses to be different, that can be mistaken for rudeness or non-compliance. The problem faced within institutions is for the researcher the long list of rules that do not inform children when it is right to say no without feelings of guilt and without fear of being penalized.

Doyle (1993:21-22) states that the observations made from various research projects point out that child molesters usually seek positions where they have contact with children. If they are given sole responsibility for the care of the children, they manage to plan and execute their deviant orientations easily (compare Interpol, 2003:1). Kowlowski (2000) highlights the fact that institutions and other societal systems such as pre-schools, scouts and churches usually hire

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volunteers and staff before conducting a background check. Once employed, they also fail to monitor and supervise and to educate the children about the dangers of inappropriate sexual advances by their guardians.

5. THE EFFECTS OF SEXUAL ABUSE ON A CHILD

According to the American Psychological Association (2001:1), children who have been sexually abused can suffer a range of psychological and behavioural problems, from mild to severe, in both the short and the long term. Whatever the form of sexual abuse that children experience, the effects are extremely damaging and traumatic. Glaser and Frosh (1993:19-25), American Psychological Association (2001:1) and Doyle (1993:80) explain that the effects of sexual abuse can be both initial/short-term and long-term (compare Browne and Finkelhor, 1986:66-77). By initial effects the authors refer to those reactions occurring within two (2) years of termination of abuse. The initial effects may include reactions of fear, anxiety, depression, anger and hostility, inappropriate sexual behaviour, sleep disturbances, change in eating habits, guilt and shame, difficulties at school, truancy, dropping out of school, running away from home and early marriages. These effects will vary depending upon the circumstances of the abuse and the child's developmental stage.

The American Psychological Association (2001: 1) cautions that the negative effects of child sexual abuse can affect the victim for many years and into adulthood. It points out further that there may not necessarily be any lasting or obvious physical effects of sexual abuse, but the psychological effects are much more prominent. The effects show themselves in many different ways or areas of the survivor's life and may not surface until the survivor has reached adulthood. It also indicates that the effects of sexual abuse on children, includes emotional distress and dysfunction, post-traumatic stress, behavioural problems, negative interpersonal consequences and cognitive difficulties and distortions. Lown (2001:4) cautions that it is possible that the long term effects of the abuse will not be observed because the victim has learned to hide or suppress the feelings as a way to survive the abuse. When the abuse is disclosed the victim may relate the experience in a calm and unemotional way. Mullen and Fleming (1998:3) add that the long term effects of child sexual abuse should be understood as an interaction between the developmental,

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psychological, social and interpersonal development perspective. The researcher regards this as adopting a holistic approach towards the way people in general and professionals in particular regard the phenomenon of child sexual abuse. The common long-term psychological effects that have been observed by the American Psychological Association (2001:1), Whealin (2002:2), Fitzgerald and Lawrence (1994) include the following:

- Victims usually experience feelings of depression.
- They display high levels of anxiety and tension which may lead to self-destruction.
- Victims feel more isolated and stigmatized as adults.
- Distortion of the self-image and the image of others.
- They encounter continued problems with their parents.
- As parents the victims find it difficult to parent and respond to the needs of their own children.
- They experience difficulty in trusting others.
- Vulnerability to re-victimization later in life and problems with sexual adjustment.

Authors such as Gil (1991:3) and Glaser and Frosh (1993:24) have identified the following factors that mediate the impact of any type of abuse on children:

5.1 AGE OF THE CHILD

Several authors like Gil (1991:3-4), Browne and Finkelhor (1986:74), Veltkamp and Miller (1994:28) and Steele and Alexander (1981:223) agree that the age of the child will determine the impact of the abusive act on the child. Van der Kolk in Gil (1991:3-4) states that childhood trauma is the most damaging to younger children because the central nervous system and cognitive functions have not yet fully matured. Perry and Thomas (2003:1-4) state that despite the limited development of the child's nervous and cognitive systems, the child's brain is able to code and store all incoming sensory information. This stored information forms part of the child's memories although they are not cognitive. According to these authors this is the reason why infants and young children are more vulnerable to traumatic stress. If the original experiences of the infant with primary caregivers involve fear, unpredictability, pain and

abnormal genital sensations, neural organization in many key areas will be altered. Veltkamp and Miller (1994:28) explain that the younger child, due to immature cognitive functions, may not understand what is really going on, but may experience physical pain, which makes an initial sexual experience an emotionally and physically painful one. Perry and Thomas (unknown:2) adds that the abnormal association may be created between genital touch and fear, thereby laying the foundation for future psychosexual development. The child may have a lifetime of difficulties with intimacy, trust, touch and bonding, and a lowered self-esteem. Later in life, this association of sex with pain may contribute towards a negative attitude towards sex as an adult. Feelings expressed range from confusion, bewilderment, anger, depression and guilt in older children (Veltkamp and Miller, 1994:28).

5.2 CHRONICITY OF THE ABUSE

According to Gil (1991:4), Doyle (1994:86) and Veltkamp and Miller (1994:28), the longer the period of the child's exposure to sexual abuse, the more traumatic it becomes. Interpol (2003:24) indicated that the victims of sexual abuse are carefully selected and groomed over a period of months or years. This is done to gain control over the child through instilling feelings of fear, acts of oppression, favours and threats against the child or the parent. All these methods are used to ensure that the child feels guilty about what has happened. If the abuse continues over a period of time, the child feels a sense of helplessness and vulnerability. This sense of helplessness makes a child to have a feeling of being trapped in an abusive situation and they will find it hard to resist. Symonds in Doyle (1994:86) calls this feeling of helplessness and numbness as frozen fright. These children are continuously told that if they disclose the abuse, their abuser will kill their parents and even their pets. They are even told that when they disclose the abuse, no one will believe them. With this constant negative reinforcement from their abusers as well as the stigma that hangs over the child if the abuse has been disclosed, it is not surprising that some children never disclose the abuse. This process is called child sexual abuse accommodation syndrome.

5.3 SEVERITY OF THE ABUSE

According to Veltkamp and Miller (1994:28), the greater the level of aggression, the more traumatic the effects will be. Browne and Finkelhor (1986: 74) as well as Gil (1991:4) and Steele and Alexander (1981:224) confirm this and are of the opinion that the aggression displayed in sexual abuse is accompanied by physical and verbal aggression. These authors state that the emotional climate of the family of the sexually abused child, will determine the extent of the effects of the abuse. They highlight that in a family with healthy relationships, an abused child will find comfort and support to deal with the trauma. The American Psychological Association (2001:1) adds that children who are able to confide in a trusted adult and who are believed, experience less trauma than children who do not disclose the abuse. The researcher is of the opinion that the most painful experience in sexual abuse is not the act itself, but the non-caring attitude displayed by the confidants. This attitude contributes to feelings of guilt and of denial and the child might change the earlier story about the sexual abuse (Newton 2001:4).

5.4 THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE OFFENDER

Different authors such as Gil (1991:4), Browne and Finkelhor (1986:74) and Vetkamp and Miller (1994:28) agree that if a child is abused by a known or close person, the impact of the abuse becomes severe. The perpetrator may be a parent, sibling, aunt, cousin or teacher. The American Psychological Association (2001:1-3) confirms this statement by indicating that children who experience the most severe types of abuse, perpetrators are family members or those people known to the child. Veltkamp and Miller (l994:28) show that the child's level of trust is negatively impacted because of the fact that the child experienced that the person that s/he loves and trusts the most, is not worthy to be trusted. Instead of providing safety, this person only hurts. This experience consequently leaves the child more confused and guilt ridden.

5.5 THE LEVEL OF THREATS

Several authors like Doyle (1994:86-94) and Gil (1991:4-5) agree that the presence of threats may create feelings of anxiety and fear in the child. These threats have a tendency to groom

children not to disclose the abuse if they want to ensure their own safety or the safety of a loved one or pet. Thus, the child feels trapped and helpless, reacts through expressions of various behaviours ranging from denial, fear and anger, accommodation, depression and despair, to internalisation and integration. Newton (2001:2) indicates that if force, intimidation, threats and duress have been used, the threats may be taken seriously by the child because of previous experiences of violence witnessed within the child's family. It is the researcher's perception that the behavioural expressions are an outcry for help or a signal that the child is not safe and needs someone to protect him or her.

5.6 THE EMOTIONAL CLIMATE OF THE CHILD'S FAMILY PRIOR TO THE ABUSE

As already mentioned in point 5.3, a child who is abused by an outsider and who can immediately be comforted and supported to deal with the trauma, will experience less trauma. The opposite is true for disturbed or unhealthy families. The sexual abuse becomes traumatic because of the non-emphatic, uncaring climate prevalent within the family (American Psychological Association, 2001:5; Steele and Alexander, 1981:224). Perry and Thomas (2003:3-4) confirm that if primary caregivers are not consistent, responsive, attuned, protective and nurturing or worse if they participate in the sexual abuse, the child's future relationships will be corrupted and distorted. Hollely (2002:14) confirms the fact that the uncaring attitude of the family/caregivers has given rise to the idea of providing the child with a trusted person to support him/her through the trial.

5.7 THE CHILD'S MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH

Adams-Tucker in Gil (1991:5-6) states that if a child has a good psychological health prior the abuse, the child is in a better position to resist the damaging effects of the abuse. For the researcher, this means that if children have achieved that inner sense of security, they will face the world and its challenges with boldness. This sense of security can be formed if the family relationships are supportive and responsive to the child's needs (Louw, van Ede and Louw, 1998:212-214).

5.8 THE GUILT EXPERIENCED BY THE CHILD

Lown (2001:7) points out that children often blame themselves for being involved in the abuse since they feel responsible for the abuse. This is usually the case if the child experienced some pleasure during the sexual contact whereas the act is illegal or amoral. This statement is confirmed by McFarlenc and Korbin in Gil (1991:6), in which they assume that the guilty feelings magnify the extent of the trauma. Children tend to blame themselves for the abuse as they feel they were at the wrong place at the wrong time. Instead of saying to themselves that "something bad happened to me", they say "I did something bad". For the researcher, these self-statements intensify the child's confusion and guilt.

5.9 THE SEX OF THE VICTIM AND OF THE OFFENDER

Research done by Gil (1991:6) dispels the myth that males suffered lesser trauma than female victims. There are valuable insights into the impact of sexual abuse on boys and men. Catanach (1992:132) states that boys who have been sexually abused experience the same feelings of anger, sadness, low self-esteem, confusion and loss as girls. For the researcher, this statement unequivocally states that both boys and girls are negatively impacted by the abuse.

5.10 PARENTAL RESPONSES TO THE CHILD'S VICTIMIZATION

Tufts in Gil (1991:6) and Mullen and Fleming (1998:14) points out that children's recovery is greatly enhanced by the parents who believe children when they disclose the abuse. An unsupportive or over-reactive parental response results in greater trauma. In believing the child regardless of inherent doubts can, according to the researcher, maximize the possibilities of the child to disclose more information on the abuse such as the duration over which it occurred and ensures that this disclosed information is not later retracted or changed as sexually abused children mostly do. If it happens that the information was not correct, it still serves a purpose as it leads the way to further investigations (Doyle, 1994:141-3 and Browne and Finkelhor, 1986:75). Hollely (2002:14) confirms the above statements and adds that the initial reaction to the child's disclosure of an abusive experience will have an effect on the child's sense of well-

being. Where the experience of disclosure is a negative one, it will be further exacerbated by the child's experience in court.

6. PROCESS OF SEXUAL ABUSE

Doyle (1994:85-94) is of the opinion that the trauma of sexual abuse is more or less the same as that of people in hostage situations. Doyle outlines the process of sexual abuse as occurring in six (6) stages, which will be discussed below:

6.1 STAGE 1 - Frozen Fright

This is a stage that occurs at the onset of sexual abuse. Symonds in Doyle (1994:86) explains that frozen fright superficially appears to be a state exhibited when a child feels trapped, helpless, hopeless and powerless. During the abuse, the child will not resist or cry out and this failure to protect oneself may breed a ground for further abuse. The children tend to be cooperative and friendly. This behaviour confuses even the victim, the abuser, helping professionals and society in general (Meier, 1985:59-60). Dante and Fisher (2001:19-23) state that before the child experiences the state of frozen fright, the child is faced with a choice of whether to run away (flight) or face up to it (fight). If both flight and fight reactions are blocked, the last option is playing dead. This situation alters the state of consciousness to such an extent that the child feels no pain of the experience.

6.2 STAGE 2- Denial

Doyle (1994:87) states that denial is the second response after an abuse has occurred. At times a child may dismiss the importance of the abuse. Doyle points out that the short-term denial is a useful cushion against an unpleasant experience. For the researcher, denial is a defense mechanism and it is meant to safeguard the child possibly against harm by him/herself (guilt), harm by unbelieving adults (parents/professionals) and harm by society if they blame the victim for the abuse.

6.3 STAGE 3- Fear and Anger

Kubler-Ross in Doyle (1994:89) has found through research that when the first stage of denial cannot be maintained any longer, it is replaced by feelings of anger, rage, envy and resentment. Doyle (1994:89) states that victims may also experience fear as they realize the danger and enormity of their situation. In general these feelings are projected on people who try to protect the child against further abuse or who try to create emotional security for the child. Lown (2001:7) states that the children will sometimes fear that they have done something wrong, that their families will reject them and that either the offender or themselves will be removed from home because of the disclosure of the abuse. At times the children may be crippled about the fear of the abuser as well as the threats that have been made against the children, the children's family or a pet. According to the researcher the fear that is inflicted on the children, serves a purpose of keeping the children under the abusers' control. This breeds more room for maintaining the abuse.

6.4 STAGE 4- Positive Bonds and Introjection

The will to survive usually leads people to retain hope and seek out means and signs to support it. Doyle (1994:90-2) confirms this statement by stating that the external projection of fear and anger unites the victim and the perpetrator in a common bond that often becomes a positive one. The victims usually try hard to convince themselves that the abuser is not as bad as he/she appears. Every time an abuser shows an act of kindness such as buying presents for the victim, offering a ride in a lift or a cigarette, the abused see it as confirmation of their abusers goodness (compare Interpol, 2003:2, CARI, unknown: 3 and Newton, 2001:1-2). According to Doyle this is part of the grooming process and the beginning of introjection.

Clark and Fraser in Schoeman and van der Merwe (1996:37) describe introjection as the uncritical acceptance of rules or patterns of behaviour which are imposed by parents, teachers and organizations like the schools, Children's Homes and places of safety.

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6.5 STAGE 5 - Depression and Despair

This stage is characterized by the projection inwardly of the anger felt by the victim, and is often worsened if the perpetrator behaves well. The perpetrator's behaviour leads to self-blame by the abused (Doyle, 1994:92). According to Lown (2001:7), children may be depressed if they feel or believe that everyone knows about the abuse. They may also be depressed by the fact that they feel different from other children since the abuse occurred. It then becomes the responsibility of adults to reassure the children that they still look the same and they were not responsible for what happened to them. CARI (online) states that this is crucial for the child to know since the child's world is mostly self-centred.

6.6 STAGE 6 - Acceptance and Integration

Doyle (1994:93) highlights that children who feel trapped and hopeless are unlikely to seek rescue. They reach a stage of numbness/acceptance, whereby they accept the abuse as their own burden to carry. Doyle points out that this acceptance ultimately deprives the child of the right to grow up as an emotionally happy child.

There are similarities between Doyle's six stages and Miller and Feibelman's four stages of sexual abuse. The researcher will depict Miller and Feibelman's stages in the following diagram adopted from Veltkamp and Miller (1994:30):

Figure 1: Stages of sexual abuse

Revisit	Psychological Stress	Revisit	
Abusing Experience(s)	Cognitive Disorganization And avoidance	Reassessment Re-evaluation And Reasoning	Acceptance and Resoloution
	Physical Trauma	Revisit	
STAGE 1	STAGE 2	STAGE 3	STAGE 4
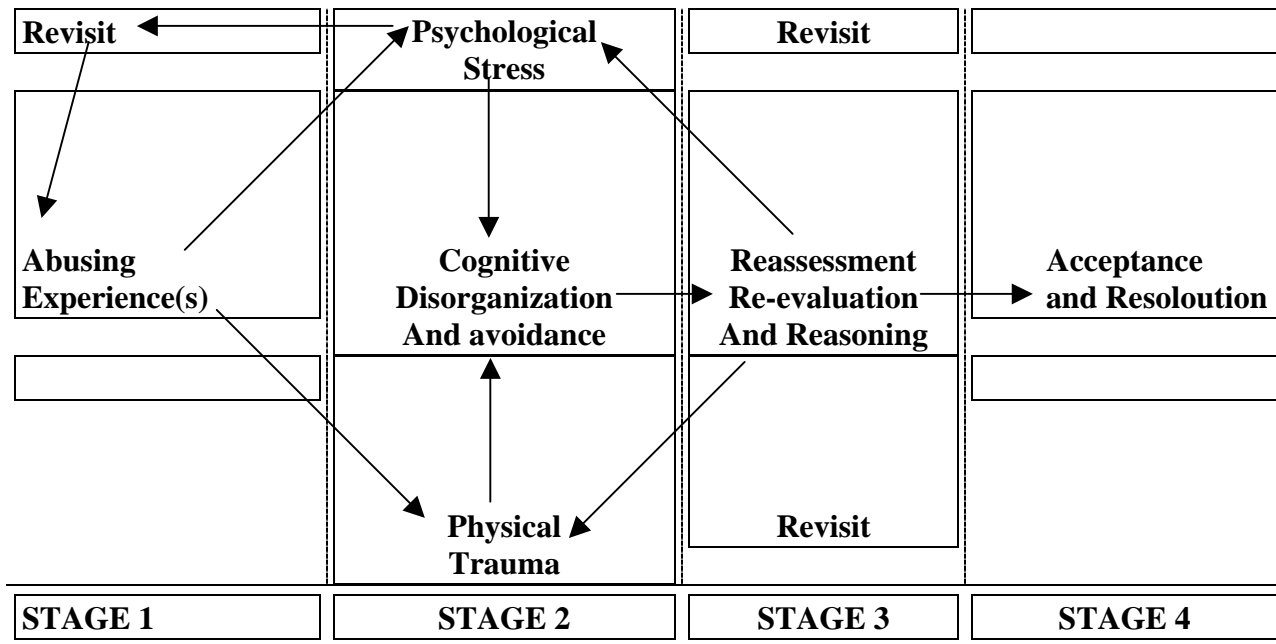
According to Miller and Feibelman in Veltkamp and Miller (1994:31), the second stage of cognitive disorganization and avoidance inhibits the child to revisit the first stage of victimization and the confusion that follows. Thus for the researcher this statement clearly spells out the trauma and confusion that children experience as they concentrate on the physical trauma associated with the act as well as the expectations of the abuser.

7. THE PROCESS THROUGH WHICH SEXUALLY ABUSED CHILDREN COME TO THE NOTICE OF THE HELPING PROFESSIONS

The sexually abused child comes to the attention of the helping professionals in various ways. They may come to the notice of professionals mostly after the disclosure of sexual abuse or after an observation was made concerning the change in the child's normal behaviour.

7.1 THE DISCLOSURE

The contact between the abused child and the helper will be established only after an accusation of sexual abuse has been made against a parent or another adult (Haugaard and Reppucci, 1994:148). As already mentioned, the people towards whom the sexual abuse allegation is disclosed have a responsibility to believe the child. The researcher believes that if the confidants of the disclosed information communicate understanding and support in words and actions, children will feel more comfortable to reveal their problem. The use of drawings, anatomically correct dolls, family dolls, fables, and simple verbal language is recommended in helping children to disclose the abuse (Lown, 2001:4-6, Haugaard and Reppucci 1998:158 and Veltkarnp and Miller, 1994:43-57). Haugaard and Reppucci (1998:161-2) mentioned that children who disclose sexual abuse, may at times change their first accusation. The retraction may be due to one or more of the following reasons:

- They may be threatened if they disclose the abuse.
- They are embarrassed by the sexual abuse.
- They feel responsible for the abuse.

The authors mention that even if the original statement is retracted or changed, the change should still be regarded as an additional piece of information. CARI (online) points out that the process of disclosure of sexual abuse is affected by various factors that may be within the child and others imposed by the child's environment unawares. These factors include the following:

- Being a child/the age of the child.
- The child's view of the world.
- Believing the abusers threats and fear of the consequences.
- Protecting the family system.
- The child's attachment to the abuser.
- Fear of rejection.
- Feeling of helplessness.

- Obedience-lack of selfpower.
- Not knowing with who and how to share.

Authors such as Thompson and Rudolph (2000:438) and Schoeman and van der Merwe (1996:6-9) point out that there is a difference between work done with adults and work done with children. Thompson and Rudolph (2000:438) state that abused children are not easy clients. They have learned not to trust themselves, other people or their environment. The children therefore choose to withdraw rather than form relationships with inconsistent people. Schoeman and van der Merwe (1996:6-9) state that there are three main factors that indicate the difference between the work with adults comparing with children:

- Differences due to the developmental level.
- Differences in communication.
- Differences in the handling of the client role.

Due to the fact that children have their own way of relating to the world, it is suggested that extreme care should be taken when assessing them. There is a general agreement amongst authors on the fact that it is crucial to form a relationship of trust with the child first before engaging in any in-depth work with the child. This is very crucial because the child's sense of trust has been damaged to some extent (Doyle, 1994:136-143, Schoeman and van der Merwe, 1996:22, Schoeman, 1996:29-30 and Thompson and Rudolph, 2000:440). Schoeman is of the opinion that this relationship may mean becoming the child's friend, because no child can share secrets with a total stranger. According to the researcher, the friendship role can be short or long term depending on the type of service to be rendered. Hollely (2002:14-17) interrogates the position of a support person or intermediary and its effectiveness. According to this author, the formation of a relationship of trust is questionable since the support person will meet the child shortly before the court session commences. The support person has to interview the child, briefly trying to explain her role in the case to allay the child's fears. White, Santilli and Quinn in Haugaard and Reppucci(1998: 164) propose an ideal way of assessment when they formulate the following guidelines:

- The interviewer should not suggest the circumstance of the abuse to ensure that the information is free of external contamination.
- The interviewer should strive to eliminate internal contamination.
- The child should not be given any directions about what to name the dolls or which situation to put them in.
- They suggest the use of a video-tape in order to reduce the number of times the child has to repeat the description of the abuse. By repetition the child may decide to stop to explain and refuse to participate in any further investigations.

There are several myths about the child's experience of sexual abuse that are exposed by people who respond to child sexual abuse incidents. Some of these statements are false. Haugaard and Reppucci (1998:174-6) highlight the following indicators of true and false accusations:

Table 2: Indicators of true and false accusations

TRUTHFUL	FALSE
The child has difficulty in disclosing the abuse.	The disclosure is made easily and is not accompanied by noticeable affect.
The child makes several half-hearted retractions and subsequent confirmations of the abuse.	The child uses adult sexual language and is unable to provide specific description of the sexual activity.
The disclosure is accompanied by depressed /anxious feelings.	It appears to be easy for the child to confront the accused perpetrator.
The child has difficulty in confronting the alleged abuser.	There is a discrepancy between the child's accusation and his/her confront with the accused.
The child is anxious or seductive in the alleged abuser's presence.	It appears that the child is being prompted by the accusing parent.
The child describes the sexual activity in age-appropriate language and can give a detailed description of the specific activities that took place.	Very intense incestuous activity is described as beginning almost at once.
If completed /attempted intercourse is alleged, the intensity of the sexual activity grew gradually over time.	The parents are involved in a custody dispute or there are other signs of high levels of marital discord.
The accusing parent is ambivalent about involving the child in the investigation.	The accusing parent is eager for the child to testify at all costs and insists on being present when the child is interviewed.
The accusing parent indicates remorse for not recognizing previous signs of the abuse and for not protecting the child.	The accusing parent gives only vague responses when asked about the development of the abuse.
	The older accusing child appears to be seeking revenge against a parent.

The most challenging issues of sexual abuse are making a decision pertaining to crisis intervention, protecting and treatment planning for the victim. Of highest priority is the protection of the child victim. This protection may entail protecting the child whilst at home, or the removal of the child or the abuser if the abuse occurred at home. It is also important to keep the family unit together as far as possible (Haugaard and Reppucci, 1998:10-l 1). Whatever step is taken to protect the child, the child's best interests or needs should be considered as more important as anything else (Skelton, 1998:126).

7.2 BEHAVIOURAL INDICATORS

At times the child may disclose sexual abuse long after it has happened. The child could have displayed the seven problem areas identified as BASIC ID by Lazarus (Thompson and Rudolph 2000:27-28 and West, 1992:35). The problems are as follows:

Table 3: The seven problem areas

B	**Behaviour:** Fighting, disruptions, talking, stealing, procrastination, excessive, masturbation, forgetfulness, age inappropriate sexual acts and language, withdrawal, promiscuity, inserting objects into genitals or anus, sexually abusing other children and animals, self-destructive behaviour and fire-setting
A	**Affect**: Expression of anger, personality splits, suicidal attempts
S	Sensation/School: Headaches, backaches, stomach-aches, school failure, perceptual/motor problems, wetting, soiling or smearing (regression)
I	**Imagery**: Nightmares, flashbacks, low self-esteem, fear of rejection, excessive daydreaming and fantasizing
C	**Cognition**: Irrational thinking, difficulty in setting goals, decision-making problems
I	**Interpersonal relationships**: Withdrawing from others, conflict with peers and adults, family problems
D	**Drugs/Diet**: Hyperactivity, weight control problems, drug abuse and addiction

This list is not exhaustive but only serves to show the long list of problems that may bring a child in contact with a therapist (Lown, 2001:3-4.) According to the researcher, all these symptoms are an indication that the child needs help and different outlets are used to convey the message. Since the child has used various ways to get the attention of the adults, the researcher strongly believes that it is the responsibility of parents as well as those acting **in loco parentis** to make sure that the child receives the necessary support.

7.3 THE ROLE OF THE HELPER

The helper has a multi-fold of responsibilities to perform in relation to the child victim, the abuser, the family at large and the community. Each of the responsibilities aims at ensuring the protection of the child and at preserving the family unit at all cost.

7.3.1 Towards the child

When discussing disclosure, the researcher highlighted the role of the therapist or social worker within the statutory process. The primary responsibility and challenge is that of believing in the child's statement of abuse. The researcher has also indicated the importance of the use of drawings, fables, and dolls in assisting the child to tell her/his story. Doyle (1994:145-146) states that the therapist should acknowledge the feelings expressed by children such as anger, love, hatred and being tearful. The therapist has the right to challenge the source of the emotion and its directions. As they are allowed to express their feelings constructively, they need the assurance that they are not the only ones who have been abused. As the child is reassured and comforted, the therapist should be careful on the use of touch as a comfort media since the child may not be at ease with the physical touch and may need personal space. Wieland in Potgieter (2000:37) points out that the sexual abuse invades and distorts the child's boundaries and therefore leaves a sense of betrayal in the child by people close to him/her. With children who have learned that to get affection from adults they have to be sexual, the helper may need to educate the child on good and bad touches (Doyle, 1993:21-22 and Thompson and Rudolph, 2000:439).

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The child needs to be prepared on what may happen after disclosure such as:

- The involvement of the child protection unit and the courts of law.
- They also need to be supported to cope with their grief and loss. Sexually abused children have lost their security, trust, positive self-worth, innocence, childhood, closeness with the abuser if they were close, loss of physical health, loss of control over their bodies, dignity and possibly part of their family system (Fitzgerald and Lawrence, 1994: 1 and Doyle, 1994:146-190). Fitzgerald and Lawrence (1994:1) point out that these losses may occur at the time of the abuse or later depending on when the abuse was disclosed and the losses may be either temporary or permanent.

7.3.2 Towards the perpetrator

Haugaard and Reppucci (1998:214-215) point out that if it serves the best interests of the child, the abuser may be removed from home through a court order. The removal order may stipulate that the abuser attends treatment whilst not at home. For the researcher, this treatment may be offered to the abuser whilst serving a prison sentence or whilst outside the home where he will be expected to attend a compulsory treatment program. This form of sentence does not exist in practice in South Africa. Such a removal allows the victim to lead a normal life during the traumatic time and ensures that other children in the family are protected from abuse in the victim's absence. However, it should be noted that the removal may be of a temporary nature and this puts pressure on the social worker to render reunification services to the whole family (Compare Department of Welfare, 1998:10-12, Skelton, 1998:140 and Child Care Act No. 74 of 1983). Re-unification of the family becomes crucial since families are building blocks of any nation. According to the researcher, re-unification services are necessary because people need to acknowledge wrongs done in the past, learn from them and create new ways of relating in the future. Without forgiveness by the victim as well as the family members, the perpetrator as well as the whole family continually carry a load of guilt and hurt which according to the researcher can be minimized by forgiveness. The perpetrator must also accept responsibility and apologise to the victim and all affected. For the researcher, being reconciled to one's own people after an incident of incest, is like being given a fresh chance to belong somewhere where you can receive

support and understanding.

7.3.3 Towards the family

The role of the social worker extends towards the silent victims of the sexual abuse most especially in the case of incest. These are the siblings of the abused child and the non-abusive parent. Haugaard and Reppucci (1998:225-227) stress the importance of reaching out to the non-abusive parent who is mostly the mother. The mother of the sexually abuse child needs to be assisted to deal with the following conflicts within herself:

- Financial insecurity if the husband gets imprisoned. This will help her to deal with her own emotional concerns and those of the children.
- The choice of whether to believe and support her husband or the child as she loves them both.
- The strength to deal with societal attitudes towards the abuse.
- Acknowledging the trauma experienced by other children in the family and the need to help them to express their views and feelings about the abuse (Scheepers, 1994:10). Scheepers (1994:12) points out the importance of establishing rapport with the family system. For the researcher, the establishment of this alliance brings in the family as team members in the treatment process. They have more information about the child and remain the lifeblood of the child in this traumatic period.
- The child's own guilt.

Doyle (1994:202-4) suggests the following guidelines for parents on protecting their children against further abuse:

- Good and open communication channels.
- Remain calm and avoid expressing strong feelings in front of the victim and the siblings.
- The child's evidence needs to be taken seriously and revealed as the truth during the disclosure.

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- Children should be allowed to talk about the abuse.
- Information should be shared with other children and the developmental stage of the children needs to be taken into consideration.
- Abused children should be encouraged to talk about their fears created by threats made.
- Abused children need to know what is good or bad or inappropriate touching.
- Parents need to be vigilant but not to be too restrictive or overprotective towards their children.

For the researcher, the suggested guidelines for protecting children against sexual abuse imply that it is important for parents to make sure that at all times they keep communication channels between them and their children open and a high level of consistency is expected so that the parent does not confuse the child who opens up and seeks help from an inconsistent parent. Furthermore, by keeping channels of communication open and consistent, children are assured of the safety of their environment. As the parent listens to the child's concerns, the response may at times be reassuring or educational.

8. CONCLUSION

For the researcher, sexual abuse of children remains an incident that is practically still under-reported. The reason thereof is that the society has made it through its laws, tough for the victim to prove that the sexual abuse actually occurred. Providing such proof, takes a long time and this makes the child to live in a confused and disorganized state. By the time the process is finalized, children may feel exhausted and could have developed defense mechanisms to safeguard themselves against further hurt or pain. Retraction of an earlier confession usually serves as the best defence mechanism since it ensures the child's protection. Thus the challenge facing helping professions is "healing the hurt" which is prevalent in the long-term effects of childhood sexual abuse.

CHAPTER 3

THE PARENTING PROCESS

1. INTRODUCTION

Martin and Corbeck (1997:4) regard parenting as a process that involves adults giving birth, protecting, nurturing and guiding the child. It is regarded as an experience that changes people emotionally, socially and intellectually. Over time, children become autonomous but parents still have a strong influence since they also affect children's development by selecting settings for them, like neighbourhoods where they live and playgroups. Scazioni (1995:26-8) is of the opinion that parenting is a lifetime occupation and commitment. Clifford-Poston (2001:6-7) asks how and where one learns to be a parent and where sound instincts of parents come from. Such instinctive knowing of what children require and being able to establish rapport with them has little to do with what knowledge they have about it. Clifford-Poston (2001:9) is of the opinion that children learn in a family to be parents. According to this author, what our parents did, is absorbed over a number of years until it becomes an instinctive way of behaving.

2. AIM OF PARENTING

Scazioni (1995:37) states that the aim of parenting is to develop a child from a helpless and dependant infant to a strong, independent and resilient person. As much as both men and women want to have children and experience it as enjoyable, not all of them have the capacity

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to be responsible parents or they are simply not motivated to be like that. Scazioni (1995:21-23) states that people decide to have children for a variety of reasons, namely:

- To reproduce themselves.
- Societal pressure.
- Continuation of family lineage.
- Natural urge to be parents.
- Children as appealing.
- Out of curiosity on what parenthood roles to play.
- Fear of future regrets.

3. PARENTAL ROLES

When one becomes a parent, there are immediate and non-negotiable roles that a parent needs to assume in order to ensure that the child being raised can become a responsible adult. Such roles are usually prescribed by society and some are instinctive. The roles may be many but the researcher will in this study only focus on the parents' role in socialization, the responsibility to provide for the needs of the children and on enforcing loyalty.

3.1 SOCIALIZATION

Solomon and Biller (1986:52-53) state that the cultural perspective of each society guides the way in which children are viewed and protected within the family and other social institutions. Culture and society have expected roles for mothers and fathers. These roles are more evident and entrenched in how children are socialized.

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Holden (1997:94) defines socialization as the teaching of children how to behave in ways that are acceptable in their cultural context through modelling, instruction and discipline. Furthermore children need to internalize what they are taught and by so doing, they develop an internal motivation to control their behaviour and act in socially acceptable ways. This is necessary since parental supervision will not always be available.

Parental roles according to Holden (1997:94) include the following:

- Through conscience development, parents need to arouse to an appropriate level of a child's anxiety in response to a misdeed. At the same time the child must be allowed to exercise self- control in order to refrain from committing the misdeed.

- Teaching acceptable behaviour as well as appropriate sexual behaviour and boundaries before the perpetrator prescribes them for the child.

- Expressing appropriate expectations.

- Disciplining.

- Providing affection.

- Modelling moral behaviour (Compare Solomon and Biller, 1986:52-53).

Parents usually have expectations regarding how their children should behave towards others, most especially to adults. These expectations tend to confuse the children instead of serving as a protective measure. Devenish, Funnel and Greathead (1992:296) point out three (3) expectations of parents and society regarding their children's behaviour:

- Children are taught to obey, trust and not to question adults. This makes it easier for them to be taken advantage of.

- Many children are also told to ignore or suppress their feelings because their expression

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is regarded as rudeness, thereby losing a valuable tool for protecting themselves.

- Children are taught to be wary of strangers whereas sexual abuse is most perpetrated by family members (compare Meier, 1985:50).

For the researcher, this approach to parenting is very dangerous because it does not set limitations on when and how much to trust, obey, when to question adults and when it is okay to express emotions without feeling guilty. This simply cannot contribute to any emotional or physical security of a child.

3.2 PROVIDING FOR THE NEEDS OF A CHILD

Haynes-Seman and Baumgarten (1994:2-3) identify three (3) basic needs of children that transcend developmental levels and each child's history, namely, the need for nurturance, stimulation and protection. These needs need to be satisfied as the child progresses through each level so that the child can grow to become a content, responsible and secure adult.

3.2.1 NURTURANCE

Louw, van Ede and Louw (1998:564-5) point out that the nurturing stage begins from birth until two years. Haynes-Seman and Baumgarten (1994:3) state that nurturance of the child involves two components, namely, physical and emotional nurturance. Physical nurturance involves assurance that the child receives adequate food, sleep, good hygiene, medical and dental care. Emotional nurturance can be described as a prerequisite for the development of self-esteem. It involves being valued, loved, cared for and listened to by persons upon whom the child relies for care. For the researcher it is important to point out that nurturance does not end at the age of two

but it continues as the child proceeds into other developmental stages.

3.2.2 STIMULATION

The need for stimulation according to Haynes-Seman and Baumgarten (1994:3) includes social company and involvement in play and exploratory activities that facilitate cognitive, social, and physical development. Parents are regarded as the primary mediators in the world of the child. They meet the child's need for company through play, talking and holding. As the child develops, the circle of friends gradually increases from siblings, close family friends and relatives to include peers, teachers and other adults outside the family. Clifford-Poston (2001:11) argues that being empathic or being able to grasp that your child's behaviour is communication in itself and trying to match the parental response, is easier said than done. However what the parent is trying to communicate to the child is that he/she understands how the child feels and tries to find alternative ways of making the child feel more at ease. Parental response to a child's behaviour and feelings enables the child to learn how to communicate their feelings through appropriate behaviour. Their appropriate behaviour has an additional benefit to meet the needs of the child.

Freud in Louw et al (1998:43-47) states that children are sexual beings and they exhibit their sexuality from birth. According to Freud this is not observed clearly because when sexuality starts to manifest itself, there are moral codes of behaviour that are instilled and enforced to the children to forbid future manifestations. Cook and Howell (1981:108-9) support this statement and highlight that by their first year of life, children experience sexual arousal. It is at this stage that children want to identify their genitals and various labels are attached to it.

Haynes-Seman and Baumgarten (1994:2-4) point out that the initial bond between an infant and the mother develops and serves as a precursor of the infant's future interactions with others. A primary, secure and harmonious attachment between the infant and the mother ensures a child's healthy emotional and personality development. Such an attachment is regarded as a prerequisite for a maturing child to have healthy attachment relationships with others outside the family system.

3.2.3 PROTECTION

Scazioni (1995:27-28) and Holden (1997:94) point out that children need assurance of the safety of their environment and want to rely on parents to protect and buffer them from abuse and dangers in the physical world. They need consistent and predictable limits that can provide to them the freedom to explore and to express themselves in ways that are not harmful to themselves or to others. Children need someone to protect them whilst teaching them how to deal with the environment. By so doing, children are enriched in experiences that contribute to the forming of their character.

Clifford-Poston (2001:11) confirms the above statement and states that children need clear, firm boundaries throughout their lives for several reasons:

- Boundaries help the child to feel secure.
- Through boundaries the child develop a sense of self as a unique individual and separate from other people.
- Boundaries provide to children a sense of privacy around themselves and towards other

people and create a sense of respect for other people and for themselves.

- Through boundaries children learn to behave in an appropriate way.

- Boundaries help to keep a child safe and prevent them to behave in ways that may create sadness and regret within themselves.

- Boundaries can be crossed when it is appropriate.

- Parents who know their boundaries will provide an opportunity to their children to identify with healthy boundaries.

The researcher is of the opinion that the issue of setting boundaries for the child is an extension of the socialization role of parents. To set boundaries becomes a protective measure that helps to ensure the child's safety within a given environment whether parents are present or not. To the researcher, this attitude allows the child to explore the environment within given parameters of what is acceptable and what is not. Literally, boundaries have a control effect but also act as a freeing agent if the rules are clear and consistent.

3.3 PARENTING AND LOYALTY

Cotroneo and Moriarty (1992:293-298) highlight the fact that parenting instils a sense of loyalty within the child towards the family, oneself and others. This is done through motivating and shaping a child's mode of relating, commitments and expectations about giving reliable care and protection to dependant children as the individual goes through the developmental stages. According to Cotroneo and Moriarty (1992:294-297), loyalty can be both negative and positive, therefore educating children to be loyal ensures that the following crucial roles are played:

- Loyalty enables the child to be assertive in terms of self-care and self- promotion.

- Loyalty serves to keep families intact.

3.3.1 POSITIVE LOYALTY

According to Controneo and Moriarty (1992:295) loyalty can either free or enslave the child's individual growth. When loyalty enables children to take care of themselves, it is regarded as positive loyalty. Parenting is furthermore regarded as an investment which if it allows children to be free to care for themselves, they will later in life reciprocate by being loyal to their parents and by investing in their own lives, rather they being laden with a load of guilt, shame and resentment (Controneo and Moriarty; 1992:293-295). For the researcher, it means that it allows the child to take responsibility for the self or personal growth within set guidelines or coaching framework provided by the parents, which is not complicated by negative emotions and regrets.

3.3.2 NEGATIVE LOYALTY

Parenting can instil negative loyalty in the child that is enslaving and capable of stunning the child's personal growth. Negative loyalty is best described by a phenomenon called parenting. Controneo and Moriarty (1992:295-298) describe parenting as a process whereby one member of the family, most often a child comes to act as a substitute caretaker to satisfy the dependant, possessive and often destructive needs of an adult. In the process of doing so, children's needs are compromised since their own needs are ignored or become secondary.

Tomison (1996:10) highlights various situations where children may find themselves taking on a parent figure role namely:

- One parent is ill or hospitalised.

- Parents are divorced and one parent has custody of the children.

- A parent is physically present, but is in no mental position to assume parenting responsibilities.

- One or both parents abuse substances.

- The family has no or little external support.

According to Hayes and Emshoff quoted by Tomison (1996:10), parenting may implicate to take care of the parents' emotional and physical care, or that of the younger siblings and may perform inappropriate household duties. Helms (1999:1-3) confirms the statement and adds that when parents are not acting as parents, they rob the children of childhood by burdening them with adult responsibilities and making the child believe that they can only be loved through what they do and accomplish. According to Helms, this forces children to cross into adult territory or adults to cross over into the children's privacy. The parent may approach the oldest child to fill in the other spouse's role. This may lead to what is termed "emotional incest" in which a parent shares personal or sexual information that is not appropriate for the child. Mellody (1991) states that once the emotional and sexual boundaries are crossed, the boundary is damaged and the child becomes vulnerable to abuse and assaults. This in the end leads to role confusion in a family system.

Controneo and Moriarty (1992:62-63 and 296-298) view incest as an example of negative and destructive loyalty since it comes with a lot of loyalty conflicts in relationships. It is regarded as

destructive entitlement because the victim who is a child is used to rebalance the perpetrator's relational injuries, losses, failures and disappointments. Parenting by a child in incest cases, create the following:

- Undermines the child's needs and rights.

- Depletes the child's reserves of trust and self mastery.

- Distorts a child's future expectations of reliable and trustworthy relationships.

- The child can transfer distorted views and experiences to the next generations.

- Most if not all relationships are sexual.

- The mother has abdicated maternal and spousal responsibilities to the daughter.

- The child is exposed to role diffusion.

Although parentification is viewed in its negative sense, observations were made by the researcher of desperate instances where it can be useful such as in case of hospitalization, death and illness of one parent. Through the assignment of the eldest or the mature child, families have survived crisis situations. Parentification only becomes destructive when it does not acknowledge the rights and needs of the child and distorts reality (Helms, 1999:2).

4. FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO PARENTING

Meier (1985:42-50) cites three (3) major categories for reasons of child sexual abuse and the researcher sees a strong link between them and parenting. They include parental, child and ecological factors and their influence on parenting as discussed below:

4.1 PARENTAL FACTORS

Parenting is a process that is influenced by a variety of factors that play a specific role in determining its success or failure. The presence of some of these factors or a combination thereof may lead to the abuse and neglect of children. These parental factors are discussed below:

4.1.1 AGE OF THE PARENT

The age of the parent plays an important role in parenting. This is due to the fact that parenting demands a sense of maturity from the parent. A matured person, according to Louw et al. (1998: 582-584), will possess a combination of these characteristics: realistic perception, self-acceptance, competence, accepting responsibility, the capacity for intimacy, love and concern, a unifying philosophy of life, joy, life balance, commitment and integration. The teenage parent does not possess this sense of maturity. Blum and Goldhagen in Louw et al. (1998:410) views the consequences of teenage pregnancy and parenting as a syndrome of failure. Meier (1985:5) supports this and adds that a teenage mother does not have sufficient fiscal, physical, psychic or parenting resources for providing to the needs of a child. The teenage mother still needs more mothering herself.

Holden (1997:104) and Martin and Corbeck (1997:284-288) describe the child parents as follows:

- Are mostly adolescent parents.

- Has a lack of parenting skills.

- Have immature personalities and grossly deprived backgrounds.

- Are faced with a dual developmental crisis.

- Try to escape from their unhappy backgrounds by forming a relationship with someone with the same age and background.

- Have certain expectations of what the child will do for them.

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- Have little or no realities of childrearing.

- Seek romantic love and security in their relationship and parenthood.

- Are too young to cope with parenthood and often feel trapped by their babies.

- Are poor, often depressed and have little social support.

- Lost opportunities for education and adequate employment.

On the other hand the middle-aged parent may be faced with other challenges or problems due to some of these reasons:

- Did not plan to have children at all.

- Did not plan to have more children than they have.

For the researcher, the age of the parent only becomes a serious issue when the parent is not ready or matured to take on the role of nurturing, stimulating and protecting the child. Some young parents do well in parenting despite their limited resources financially. Some older parents may not have the love and time to attend to the needs of the child. Due to this unavailability, the child is left in the hands of alternate caregivers such as nannies and day-care centres.

4.1.2 SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS

Martin and Corbeck (1997:14) are of the opinion that the socio-economic status of the family influences parenting. The family's socio-economic status is reflected through the parent's education, income and occupation. The link is on the varying financial resources and child rearing attitudes. Poverty for example, creates a high-risk context for parenting because of low

income, poor housing and overcrowding, high levels of daily stress and work opportunities. Thompson and Rudolph (2000:449-450) see the economic status of the family as closely linked with the marital status of the parents. According to them, single and divorced parents are the most affected since they have minimal or no financial support from their partners.

4.1.3 PSYCHO-SOCIAL FACTORS

Parenting can be affected due to the presence of psychological factors and disorders. Tomison (1996:3) describes mental disorder as some form of psychiatric or psychological conditions, which impair the individual's functioning. These factors may contribute negatively or positively towards child rearing. The parent's own experiences as a child and as an adult will dictate how the parenting role is assumed or executed. If parents are demoralized, it will be difficult for them to take up the role of parenting (compare Meier, 1985: 8-9 and Jones, Pickett, Oates and Barbor (1987:146-148).

 According to Tomison (1996:4), impaired functioning as parents can be characterised by the following behaviours:

- May have a low self- esteem and the approach to life may be bland, fatalistic and compliant.
- Experience an inability to take control over one's own life.
- Experience a general sense of incompetence.
- Loss of control over their lives.
- Decreased ability to cope with daily demands.
- Overall distress and depression.
- Anxiety and loneliness.
- Occasional thought disorders.
- Unavailability and inability to utilize social support.

- Lack of social skills.

For the researcher, demoralized parents do not trust themselves as persons. Parenting for these parents adds to the existing personal problems and the fear to raise a child as well as the uncertainty of how to raise a child. This frustration can lead to an overwhelming feeling regarding parenting responsibilities that can result in neglecting the child's needs.

4.1.4 PARENTING AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Martin and Corbeck (l997:291-293) have identified the effects of parenting in the situation whereby either one parent or both are dependent on dependency producing substances. Substance abuse is associated with low self-esteem, emotional immaturity, depression and social isolation. This is further coupled with unemployment and unstable local environments. The stress of child rearing can contribute to an increased dependency on alcohol and drugs. In stressed families where fathers experience a substance abuse problem, the mothers tend to offer inconsistent discipline and are less supportive of their children. The resultant effects are child neglect and abandonment, children assuming adult-like responsibilities at a very young age and children becoming rebellious in order to get attention.

Holden (1997:160) states that substance-abusing parents are not only emotionally distant but they also provide less limit setting, less praise and encouragement and less helpful advice. The researcher is of the opinion that since these parents' ability to parent is challenged or limited by the abuse of dependency producing substances, their capacity to be positive role models, is negatively impacted (Meier, 1985:15).

West and Prince quoted by Holden (1997:160), point out that alcoholic parents are more emotionally distant and provide less limit setting, less praise and encouragement and less useful advice.

To the researcher, parents who abuse substances temporarily and sometimes permanently abdicate their parental roles to their children. The children have to protect themselves and act as parents themselves to ensure that life continues. The age at which the child assumes the parent role, will determine the success of the parenting role.

4.2 CHILD FACTORS

Several authors such as Clifford-Poston (2001:11) and Louw et al. (1998:353-354.) have identified factors in children that influence parenting. They include the following:

- The unwanted child.
- The problem child.
- The child who displays provocative behaviour.
- Influence of birth order.

4.2.1 THE UNWANTED CHILD

Clifford-Poston (2001:12-13) looks at parenting from a point where the mother is pregnant and a child is expected. According to Clifford-Poston, some parents have the following concerning the unborn child:

- Parents are anxious about how the young child will change their lives.

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- Fantasize on who the child may become.

- Plan on how to improve on how they were parented by their own parents.

For some parents, the pregnancy and subsequent birth of a specific child can create serious problems since the pregnancy was not planned. Morse (2001) confirms that an unplanned pregnancy leads to unplanned fatherhood, which can completely disrupt a family and cause irreparable damage. The parent may resent being an involuntary parent and faking parental affection or face the distress associated with the unwanted child. According to the researcher the same applies to the pregnant mother. Childbirth by Choice (unknown) points out that it is not all unwanted pregnancies that result in unwanted children. This is due to the fact that even effective contraceptives can still result in unwanted pregnancies. Childbirth by Choice (unknown) highlights the following reasons that may make pregnancy difficult and unwanted:

- Not being ready to raise a child.

- Lack of social support.

- The need to care for other young children.

- The need to keep a job or get education.

- Health problems.

- Pregnancy by rape or incest.

Meier (1985:4) and Jones et al. (1987:156) confirm the above and add other circumstances that may lead a child to be unwanted such as a variety of reasons that are circumstantial, for instance, marital rape, date rape, unplanned pregnancy, a disabled child, child with unwanted sex, sick child and a difficult child. The researcher will explain more about the frustrations brought by

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raising a difficult child later in this chapter.

Despite popular belief that unwanted pregnancies give rise to unwanted children, the situation is practically not so grim because of choices available to the mother of the unborn child. The expectant mother has according to Childbirth by Choice (unknown) the following choices at her disposal:

- Childbearing and motherhood.
- Adoption.
- Abortion.

According to the researcher, foster care can be another option for the mother. This option can give the parent a chance to sort herself out emotionally before she takes the child back into her custody and care.

4.2.2   THE PROBLEM CHILD

Bernier quoted by Sullivan (unknown) states that most parents eagerly await the birth of their child. They plan and fantasize about everything (from what the child will look like, to the child's future achievements). They expect to have a healthy baby, but this is not always a reality. The realisation that the child has a chronic disorder or illness is a major loss and can be quite traumatic. This can add to the fact that parenting can be a challenging and stressful experience but having a child with a major health problem extends the challenges, adds new complications and burdens for parents and the whole family. Parental stress may by financial, care, time and emotional demands presented to an already devastating situation. In some instances, the child

may be colicky, incontinent, ill, developmentally disabled or disabled in other forms (Holden, 1990: 155 and Meier, 1985:4).

Thomas and Chess in Louw et al.(1998:64 and 210) have discovered that the child's temperament also has an influence on how parents or caregivers respond to her/his needs. The difficult child does not adjust easily to daily routines, to changes within the environment, reacts strongly to stimuli, cries a lot, has temper tantrums and is difficult to comfort. According to the researcher, the problem or difficult child usually has behaviour that is provocative and it may lead to neglect and abuse of all forms by parents and caregivers mostly due to the lack of knowledge and skills of how to deal with the behaviour or the condition. The child who displays provocative behaviour is still a problem child. Soul Kurry (2002:1) points out that tantrums, sulks, defiant behaviour, outrageous clothes at every level pose a challenge to the parent. The challenge that face parents, is how best they can confront and correct the behaviour.

4.2.3 BIRTH ORDER

The birth order of a child plays a significant role in influencing the parental role. Several authors such as Louw et al.(1998:353) and Sobell (1999), share the opinion that the birth order of a child has an influence on the child's personality traits as well as the child's self-concept. They state that the way children think of themselves will also influence the way the child reacts and treats others inside and outside the family. The researcher will describe how the first-born, middle child, last and only child affect the parenting role in the sub-sections that follow here after.

4.2.3.1 THE ELDEST CHILD

Cohn and Beckworth quoted by Louw et al. (1998:353) indicate that the eldest child is given more attention and interaction than other children. The first child will however acquire greater self-confidence and accept greater responsibilities because of greater exposure to adult models. Generally, eldest children are more achievement oriented, tend to be more conforming to parental values and also tend to be less aggressive. On the other hand, eldest children also experience more guilt feelings, are more anxious and find it more difficult to cope with stressful situations. This opinion is shared by Louw et al. (1998:354) who mention that besides the above characteristics, first-born children are much easier to raise. According to the researcher, the eldest children are in difficult positions because parents and adults have expectations of how they should behave themselves. Whilst conforming, the individuality of these children is compromised in favour of family loyalty. The fear of being different from the family, brings with it, a lot of guilt.

4.2.3.2 THE MIDDLE CHILD

Van der Westhuizen in Louw et al. (1998:353) refers to the middle child as the difficult child. These children are often emotionally rejected because they fail to form an exclusive relationship with their parents but rather form closer relationships with peers. According to this authors middle children, due to the fact that they have minimal parental attention, tend to be more balanced, good mediators and learn how to compromise. They are more laid back in achievements and more relaxed than their older siblings. These authors warn that middle children can be a bit manipulative at times to satisfy their needs.

4.2.3.3 THE YOUNGEST CHILD

Louw et al. (1998:354) state that the youngest child receives a great deal of attention from parents and other siblings. The younger child is also not motivated to become independent. The youngest child can also possess some of the following characteristics:

- They can be outgoing and great at motivating others.

- They are affectionate, uncomplicated and sometimes a little bit absent-minded.

- Tend to use their birth order position to get what they want.

- Frequently have special privileges and gain considerable social skills because of their interactions with older siblings.

- Can be charming and playful.

- Do have a need to be nurtured and sometimes have difficulty in accepting responsibility.

4.2.3.4 THE ONLY CHILD

Louw et al. (1998:354) explain that the only child often gets too much attention from parents and is more likely to compete with adults because they are readily available. These children often lack the contact with children of their age and this leads to adjustment problems. According to the researcher, this is not true in all cases especially if the family expose the child to other children in different environmental contexts, and lay consistent and achievable rules as well as boundaries. In such a case, the child can develop the necessary independence. Sobell (1999) confirms this idea by stating that when families are reconstructed as in the case of stepfamilies caused by divorce, separation or death, the position of the only child can be affected. The only child may find himself or herself having to share attention and to compromise.

4.3 ECOLOGICAL FACTORS

Haynes-Seman and Baumgarten (1994:176-177) and Levendosky and Graham-Bermann (2000:25-33) state that ecological factors refer to the transactional relationship between an individual or a family with the world around it (environment). According to them, ecological factors are a means through which one may know some of the family's characteristics such as:

- Whether relationships are nurturant or conflict-lade.

- The flow of resources and energy into the family system as well as the outflow of energy into external systems.

- Any lacks which erode family strength as a unit.

Pringle (1975:107-l40) is of the opinion that all children are vulnerable and are likely to experience unhappiness and stress. Certain groups of children are made to be doubly vulnerable because of the presence of specific, potentially detrimental, personal, family or social circumstances. The researcher will discuss the following environmental factors that affect parenting:

- Large families with low income.
- One parent and divorced families.
- Children living apart from their parents.
- Parenting and domestic violence.
- Parenting and substance abuse.

4.3.1 CHILDREN FROM LARGE FAMILIES WITH A LOW INCOME

Thompson and Rudolph (2000:456-457), Solomon and Biller (1986:52-53), Clifford-Poston (2001:11) as well as Scazioni (1995:27-28) share the opinion that the bigger the family, the worse the incidence of overcrowding. Overcrowding may contribute to the parent's lack of interest in the child's school progress, restricts play space, denies privacy, and readily leads to irritability, restlessness and bad temper. To be able to give and receive love, it needs to be experienced first. Many parents have been unloved or rejected in childhood themselves. Living in a state of perpetual crisis and chronic frustration, the parents fail to cope and deal with personal anxieties. This failure makes them feel helpless and overwhelmed by problems of mere existence and punish the child as an outlet of frustration. They are unable to provide the

necessary emotional support to their children when these children are anxious and in conflict with themselves or others. Living pressures also prevent the parents from being adequate role models for their children. This leaves children with no option but to look for emotional support and model figures from their peers in the street. The need for security may remain unsatisfied because parental behaviour is unpredictable and contradictory, leaving the child confused about what is expected of them and why. The need for responsibility is forced prematurely upon the children and they may have to fend for themselves before going to school and returning to an empty house afterwards. They may also be taking care of younger siblings without appropriate parental guidance (Pringle, 1975:11-15).

4.3.2 CHILDREN IN ONE - PARENT AND DIVORCED FAMILIES

Louw et al. (1998:573) state that the contributing factors will vary depending on the individual differences and the age when one parent takes over. Children are more likely to be living with the mother as a result of divorce, separation, desertion or death. In circumstances where the mother is not present, it may also owe to the above factors and death being the most common (Pringle, 1975:123). The same author states further that children born out of wedlock, are also forced to have supplementary or total substitute care because mothers are forced to work (1975:126).

Children in divorce situations experience financial complications since some have to depend on maintenance or welfare aid or from live-in lovers. In worst scenes of custody battles, both parents sometimes reject the children. For the researcher, this situation does not provide the child with any other choice as to be placed in substitute care.

Children of divorced parents also exhibit behavioural problems since the child is exposed to drastic child rearing practices. Emery as quoted by Holden (1997:105) explains that the consequences of divorce are influenced by many variables such as the age and sex of the child, the child's age when the parents first separated, the current age of the child and the degree of continuing acrimony between the parents. Parents themselves raised by divorced parents, are in some cases regarded as somehow less adjusted than adults who grew up in intact families. Glen in Holden (1997:106) cites the following effects associated with divorce:

- Adults of divorced parents are most likely to divorce themselves.
- Children growing up without a two-parent model, act inappropriately as spouses.
- Children from single parent families engage in relationships sooner.

4.3.3 CHILDREN LIVING APART FROM THEIR PARENTS

Caplan (unknown:1) states that every society expects children to be brought up by their biological parents, who would have stable and mutually satisfying relationships with their children and with each other. They would provide their children with loving care and affection throughout childhood, act as role models to exemplify the values and behavioural norms of their culture, provide controls and guidance to help children internalise the constraints of society and offer psychological support to enable these children to master the stresses of life. According to Caplan, although a majority of children receive good-enough parenting of some sort, a substantial and increasing minority of children still do not. Caplan points out some of the factors that contribute to children being raised away from home as follows:

- Families split by divorce.
- Children born out-of wedlock.

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- Families suffering from death or serious bodily or mental illness of a parent or of one of the children.

Breiner (1990:231) shares Caplan's ideas and indicates that the reasons for children to live apart from their families, can fall within any of the following circumstances:

- Temporary crisis, for example, if a mother is absent due to illness.
- Permanent abandonment through divorce, death, children in residential care, children in limbo and children in foster care.

Caplan (unknown: 2) cautions that although the transfer of children into alternate care is regarded as the best option, it has its own hiccups that are inherent in the children themselves. Caplan has identified three (3) major obstacles faced by alternate caregivers:

- The child has to detach from the biological family, which can be difficult if the child is not ready for such a move.
- Children who have suffered more parental neglect, rejection, victimisation, and witnessed violence are more to conduct disorders that take a form of destructiveness and anti-social behaviour or oppositional rebelliousness towards adults.
- The children may transfer their previous history to the present home and expect the care givers to treat them exactly the same way as they were raised within their families. They may use manipulation and provocative behaviour in order to influence the care givers to behave badly towards them. They do this to prove that all parents or adults are just as untrustworthy as the natural parents. On the other hand, the children believe that they are not worthy to be loved.

According to the researcher, taking care of someone's child mostly in foster care and residential homes, is a big challenge because as an alternate caregiver, the person has to pass a test of bonding first with that child. If the initial bond is not formed, the element of trust cannot be developed. The setting of healthy and reasonable boundaries becomes crucial since some children have none or have blurred and damaged boundaries (Mellody, 1991: 1-3).

4. 3.4 PARENTING AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Martin and Corbeck (1997:284) indicate that one of the main responsibilities of parents, is providing protection for their children. Parents living in dangerous circumstances feel frustrated by their inability to fulfil this basic function. Levendosky and Graham (2000:26) expose the fact that research has documented the harmful effects of domestic violence on women and children but little has been done to highlight the effects of domestic violence on the women's ability to parent or on their mental health in this dangerous environment. A few studies have, however, found the following:

- The physical and psychological abuse of women by their partners contributes towards maternal parenting stress and behaviours.
- Physiological and psychological reactions of alternating states of hyper-arousal and numbing associated with the trauma of violence, could serve to diminish the mother's ability to maintain adequate functioning including parenting capacities.
- Some parents may have parenting that oscillates between periods of disengagement or withdrawal, anger, warmth and love as they respond to violence and to the external

demands of parenting.

- Their undermined trust in loved ones may cause them to withdraw from their friends and family or to become overprotective or hyper-vigilant about their children.

- Parents may restrict age-appropriate independence and thus stunt their normal growth towards independence.

- Parents who fear for their own safety may be emotionally unavailable.

(Breiner, 1990:227, Holden, 1997:105 and Martin and Corbeck, 1997:284).

5. PARENTING STYLES

Parenting is a universal process but it is never similar at any given time. This is due to the fact that parents are unique individuals whose individuality will reflect in the parenting process. Louw et al. (1998:351) describe parenting styles as the way in which parents bring up their children. Maccoby and Martin state that parenting style captures two elements of parenting: parental responsiveness and parental demandingness (Darling 1999:1). According to the authors, parental responsiveness refers to parental warmth and the extent to which parents intentionally foster individuality, self-regulation and self-assertion by being attuned, supportive and acquainted to the children's special needs and demands. By parental demandingness, the authors refer to claims that parents make on children to become integrated into the family as a whole by demanding maturity, supervision, disciplinary efforts and willingness to confront the child who disobeys. Baumrind quoted by Louw et al. (1998:351-352) has identified three parenting styles, which will be discussed below.

5.1 THE AUTHORITARIAN PARENTING STYLE

Several authors such as Louw et al. (1998:448), Darling (1999:2) and Grobman (2000:1) share the opinion that parents who raise their children according to this style of parenting, are highly demanding and directive, place high regard on conformity and obedience and are status-oriented. They will even reject their children or punish them for non-compliance with their wishes and there is little communication between parents and children. The parent always expects unconditiona1 obedience and exhibit little warmth to the children. Grobman (2000:1) states that the authoritative parent values obedience as a virtue and favours punitive, forceful measures to curb the child's self-will at points where the child's actions and beliefs, are in conflict with those of the parent. Darling (1999:2) shares this statement but quickly points out that although authoritarian parents are highly ordered and structured in approach, they fall into two distinct types: non-authoritarian directive, who are directive but not intrusive or autocratic in their power and the authoritarian-directive who are highly intrusive.

Holden (1997:27), Grobman (2000:2) and Louw et al (1998:448) agree that children who grow up in a type of family as described above, can display the following characteristics as possible consequences of this parenting style:

- Have a low self-esteem and are less independent.

- Are less skilled in their relationships with friends.

- Are reserved in relationships.

- Exhibit poor reactions to frustration and high levels of aggression are identified.

- Are more inclined to anti-social behaviour.

- Poor performance at school can be observed.

5.2 THE AUTHORITATIVE PARENTING STYLE

The authoritative parent is opposite of the authoritarian parent. The approach is more democratic in nature. According to Holden (1997:27), Louw et al. (1998:448), Darling (1999:2) and Grobman (2000:2) as well as Martin and Corbeck (1997:40), the common characteristics displayed in this parenting style can be listed as follows:

- Parents set clear guidelines for their children.
- They allow their children freedom within reasonable limits.
- They are warm, sensitive and patient.
- They encourage their children to contribute to family discussions or decisions to be made.
- They follow a democratic approach in which the rights of both children and parents are recognized and respected.
- Their influence on the children are positive.

Holden (1997:27), Louw et al. (1998:448), Grobman (2000:2), Darling (1999:2) as well as Martin and Corbeck (1997:40), highlight characteristics of children raised within this parenting style as follows:

- Children have high self-esteems.
- They are more able to internalize moral standards.
- The children perform better academically.
- Children are more independent and more ready to take risk.
- Parents are high on demanding and acceptance.
- The children have greater social responsibility, are cooperative, friendly and independent.

5.3 THE PERMISSIVE PARENTING STYLE

The permissive parenting style is a style during which the parent does not take control, but the

child does. According to Grobman (2000:1) can the following characteristics be displayed by the parents:

- Parents create an atmosphere in which children are responsible for regulating their own behaviour.
- Children are well cared for by their parents with little control over them.
- Children consequently do as they please.
- Parents are overly tolerant.

Due to the fact that the parents are overly tolerant of their children's behaviour, Holden (1997:27) and Martin and Corbeck (1997:40) state that the children tend to display behaviour which is more impulsive and aggressive in nature, lack of self-control, non-acceptance of responsibility, perform poorly at school and display immaturity in behaviour and attitude.

Although there are three basic parenting styles as proposed by Baumrind, several authors have proposed other parenting styles which are more or less similar to those of Baumrind. Collins and Read quoted by Holden (1997: 89-9O) classify parenting into three groups, namely, autonomous, dismissing and preoccupied. The researcher will discuss each of these parenting styles below.

5.4 THE UNINVOLVED PARENTING STYLE

Darling (1999:2), Holden (1997:40) and Martin and Corbeck (1997:40) state that within this style of parenting, the parent is not involved in all aspects of the child's life. Common features of this parenting style are:

- Parents are not demanding.

- They are indifferent to their children and are emotionally detached from them.

- They do the minimum that is expected from them as caregivers of their children.

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- They respond to short-term demands of their children such as food and clothing.

- They fail to set long-term guidelines and goals for the children.

- Parents are low on demand and low on accepting

- Children display disturbances in their relationships with other people

- Children react by being resentful and hostile

- Children are impulsive and anti-social

- Parents reject or neglect the child.

5.5 AUTONOMOUS PARENTS

Frikson quoted by Louw et al. (1998:203) describes autonomy as synonymous to attainment of freedom and development of self-regulation. Autonomy affects both children and parents because parents have to define boundaries and allow the child to test them with minimal interference of the parents. Collins and Repinski quoted by Louw et al. (1998:446) state that autonomous parents allow independence in the following areas:

- Cognitive autonomy- making decisions and assuming responsibility for these choices.
- Behavioural autonomy- making choices regarding friendships, leisure time and finances. The child's age needs to be taken into consideration.
- Emotional autonomy- being self reliant and independent of their parents and being able to exert self-control.
- Moral or value autonomy- forming an own value system that could serve as a guideline for own behaviour.

5.6 DISMISSING PARENTS

They are emotionally aloof from their childhood relationships. The account of their childhood

reports being cut off emotionally in relationships during their childhood. When they become parents, they become overwhelmed with responsibility of being consistently available emotionally to their own children. In the absence of emotional nurturance and stimulation, children look for that from peers and outsiders. This may at the end, render them vulnerable to abuse (Holden, 1997:89-90).

5.7 PRE-OCCUPIED PARENTS

According to Burgess (1992:118) preoccupied parents are over-involved with some traumatic childhood experiences. They tend to exhibit incoherence, anger, and passivity in recalling their childhood. The parent's pre-occupation prevents them from responding to the child's needs. This preoccupation may also lead to frustration in the children and they can look for ways to satisfy their needs outside.

From the literature review it became evident for the researcher that the authoritative parenting style is considered by the different authors as a style that works since it is characterised by fair and reasonable demands on the child, available and nurturing parents and children who are allowed to forge their independence within a guided framework (Grobman, 2000:3 and Darling, 1999:3).

6. SKILLS AND PRACTICES

Bavolek (1989:98-100) exposes skills and practices of parents that may render a child vulnerable and which may expose the child to be taken advantage of. These skills and practices will be discussed below:

6.1 Inappropriate parental expectations of the child

The Canadian Family Internet Resource (2002:1) highlights the fact that in most cases, society looks at parents as largely responsible for the provision of the child's needs and overlooks the fact that parents have needs too, that are often ignored. According to these authors, parents have a need for a positive self-image and sometimes look to their own children to provide them with a sense of worth and adequacy.

According to the Canadian Family Internet Resource (2002:2) parents also influence their children's feelings about their self-image. This is done through the statements they utter towards their children which tends to influence their thoughts of whether they are lovable or unlovable and capable or incapable. The Juvenile Justice Bulletin (2000:1-2) states that parents' inappropriate expectations of children, stem from the parents' own inadequate perception of themselves and from a lack of understanding and knowledge about capabilities and needs of children at each developmental stage (Bavolek, 1989:98). According to the Canadian Family Internet Resource (2002:2), parents set high expectations for their children because they regard them as their personal extensions or see themselves as being given a second chance to perform what they failed to achieve during their own childhood. This tendency puts unnecessary pressure on children to perform and achieve beyond what they are developmentally ready to deal with.

6.2 Lack of empathy towards children's needs

The Juvenile Justice Bulletin (2000:2) states that parents are not only unable to empathize with their children's needs, but are also unable to respond to these needs appropriately. Empathic awareness refers to the ability of parents to understand the condition of their children without actually experiencing their feelings. It is assumed that the fear of spoiling children is central to the failure to attend to these children's basic needs. Instead of attending to these basic needs, more emphasis is placed on the child being good, right and obedient. Children who are ignored and whose basic needs are neglected, fail to develop a basic sense of trust in themselves and others (Bavolek, 1989:98).

6.3 Parent-child role reversal

Juvenile Justice Bulletin (2000:3) states that when parents fail to show an empathic awareness to their children's needs, children are often left to take care of themselves (Bavolek, 1989:100). Martin and Corbeck (1997:7-8) and Huxley (2003:2) are of the opinion that the foundation of parenting begins long before individuals become parents. When they actually become parents, they bring with them a unique combination of parental traits and experiences. A parent's developmental history, including his own childhood, influences childrearing behaviour. This intergenerational parenting style may occur either as a result of direct learning or early childhood relationships.

7   ROLE OF THE FATHER IN PARENTING

The role of the father in parenting has for long been under-estimated. Thompson (2002:1) states that a father's love or lack of it is a critical yet under-studied factor in child-development. Hagele (unknown) states that the father plays an important role in pregnancy, childbirth and parenting as a stabilising influence, good listener and an essential source of physical and emotional reassurance. Hagele argues that when a child is born, the experiences that a father goes through are the same as those of the mother. Thompson (2002:1) and Fraenkel (2002:1) are of the opinion that paternal deprivation contributes to child ill treatment within and outside the family as well as to psychological maladjustment, substance abuse, depression and conduct problems. Patterns of child maltreatment are exhibited in the following parental or paternal behaviours, namely, verbal abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, over-strictness, no involvement, neglect and abandonment (Solomon and Biller 1986:221-226).

Cotroneo and Moriarty (1992:296) maintain that the manner in which one receives care, constructs and shapes lifelong obligations towards significant others outside the family. If an adult's expectations for care and devotion were not met in the family of origin, the unmet expectations are therefore assigned to friends, partners and children. Solomon and Biller (1986: 222) state that their inadequacy in parenting reflects their own deficient relationships with their own parents.

Charen (unknown:3) stressed that it is crucial for the father to develop an early bond with a child. This is done to ensure a feeling of responsibility and protectiveness and self-control towards the child. According to Charen, such paternal commitment can promote the fathers' capacity for positive nurturance and stimulation, as well as helping the child to act emotionally appropriately. According to Fraenkel (2002:1), Solomon and Biller (1986:222) and Charen (unknown:2-4), the various roles that a father plays in a family can be summarised as follows:

- Fathers act as protectors of their families.
- Fathers serve as role models for their children. They teach their sons what it means to be a man and daughters what it means to be loved and feminine. Daughters who are starved for male attention are far likely to become promiscuous teenagers and vulnerable to maltreatment by adults outside the family.
- Instills a child's positive self-image.
- Set standards for the children.
- Contributes to the rearing of a well-adjusted child.

Finkelhor quoted by Solomon and Biller (1986:51-52 and 60) points out that approximately two-thirds (2/3) of reported cases of sexual abuse involve fathers or potential father figures for example, mother's boyfriends or stepfathers. According to Solomon and Biller, the fact that most incidences occur within the family context, reinforces the notion that sexual abuse relates to paternal deprivation. They assert that children who do not receive adequate nurturance from adults are more vulnerable to inappropriate sexual advances by older children and adults. Their vulnerability stems from the fact that they are starved for male attention and role models. This renders them more likely to be overly receptive and exposed to men who may manipulate them sexually. Finkelhor asserts that most child victims come from impoverished single parent, female headed, step-parent or live-in boyfriend households or from families where the father is cold, rejecting or inadequate as a role model.

8. PARENTING STAGES

Ellen and Galinsky quoted by Martin and Corbeck (1997:117-118) indicate six (6) developmental stages of parenting which link with the developmental changes of a child. Each of the stages will be discussed below.

8.1 IMAGE MAKING STAGE

There is no agreement amongst authors as to the onset of this stage. Sale (2002:1) and Wagenhals (2003:1) are of the opinion that this stage occurs long before the conception of a child. According to Sale (2002:1) it is during this stage where a couple decide if and when they would like to have children. These parents spend more time creating images of what the pregnancy will mean to them, how it will change their lives and what they need to do to prepare for the experience of birth (Sale, 2002:1 and Wagenhals, 2003:1). Galinsky quoted by Martin

and Corbeck (1997:117-8) and Graham (unknown: 2) believes that this stage begins during pregnancy. Parents prepare for their new role and become more aware of parent-child relationships that surround them. Emotions range from excitement to concern about the responsibilities that lie ahead (compare Sale, 2002:1 and Wagenhals, 2003:1). According to the researcher, the image making stage is a reality for all parents regardless of whether they planned to have a child or not. This happens because of the fact that some parents such as teenagers and women within the context of domestic violence, conceive children without a plan.

8.2 NURTURING STAGE

According to Graham (unknown:2), Sale (2002:1) and Wagenhals (2003:2), this stage occurs between birth and infancy (0-2 years). During this stage the child is dependant upon parents for survival. Parents therefore have to learn to nurture the child's emotional and physical needs whilst balancing their own adult needs. According to the authors above, this stage also tests out the images parents had regarding what parenthood will be like and the personal adjustments that they have to make in reality (Faull, unknown:1). Sale (2002:1) is of the opinion that parents who hold on too tightly to their original images of parenting are more likely to have problems during this stage. Wagenhals (2003:2) shares this idea but quickly adds that the degree to which the parents' images of parenting agree with parenting realities determines how easily and successfully parents make the adjustment. For the researcher it is crucial that the necessary adjustments are made between fiction and reality about parenting. This is necessary because some children become prone to neglect, abuse and abandonment because parents are not ready emotionally to become parents.

8.3 AUTHORITATIVE STAGE

Sale (2002:1) indicates that this stage refers to the 2-5 age years of the child's life. According to

Draconis (2000:2), children at this stage are mostly concerned with learning three things namely: autonomy, curiosity and initiative. The child's behaviour is characterised by asking many questions, taking things apart and curiosity. According to Draconis this is the children's way of developing their sense of initiative, independence and exploration skills. The parents' role is therefore to provide a secure environment, set limits and enforce rules as children begin to assert themselves. According to Sale (2002:1) it is important to set limits because the child has begun to use the word 'no' as well. Graham (unknown:3) states that this is the period where the parent has to adopt a specific parenting style. The parent has to decide how permissive or strict they need to be, what kind of rules they need, how to set them and what to do when rules are broken (Wagenhals, 2003:2).

8.4 INTERPRETIVE STAGE

Different authors such as Sale (2002:1), Graham (unknown:3) and Wagenhals (2003:2) agree that this stage marks the end of preschool years and stretches to adolescence. During this stage children demand a lot of information and this is evident in the how and why questions they ask. During this stage the parents' role is to interpret the world to the child as the child moves into the community. The parents have to clarify their own values whilst teaching values and morals to their children. As the parents answer the child's questions about the world, Graham (unknown:3) states that they are developing the child's positive self-concepts.

8.5 INTERDEPENDENT STAGE

This stage occurs during adolescence and stretches to early adulthood. According to Sale (2002: 2), Wagenhals (2003:2) and Graham (unknown:3), this is a phase where a child develops competencies and is able to share more control with parents and become autonomous. Graham(unknown: 3) states that the parents' parenting style is further put to a test as different answers are needed for an older child. Sale (2002:2) highlights the fact that parents quickly discover that they have less control over their children since they are not always in their physical presence. Thus for Wagenhals (2003:2), the biggest challenge for parents is to learn to let go,

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renegotiate the authority within the parent-child relationship and deal with their own midlife issues. Wagenhals points out that the parents at this stage, struggle with the images of what kind of parents they have been to their teenagers.

8.6 DEPARTURE STAGE

This is a reflective stage for parents**.** They evaluate their failures and successes in parenting. They evaluate if they managed to raise an independent, responsible, loyal and moral person who will represent them as parents (Sale, 2002:2 and Wagenhals, 2003:3). From this literature review, the researcher regards parenting as a growth process for the parent and the child that occurs simultaneously. Each developmental challenge and obstacle that a child faces becomes a challenge for the parent too. The successful achievement of each stage is for the researcher an affirmation of the parents' readiness and ability to deal with parenting issues.

9. CONCLUSION

Parenting focuses on the way, children are raised by their biological and alternate caregivers. Parenting is a complex field of human experiences because there is no formal education through which one can learn how to be an effective parent. Books have been written on successful parenting, joys of parenting and so forth, but the practical component of child rearing remains an enigma.

People have children to fulfil certain agendas and sometimes their expectations are not met and lead to frustration and failure to meet the needs of the innocent child. There are various factors that contribute to the success and failure of parenting as mentioned in this chapter. These factors may be within the parent, child and the environment. The presence of a strong support system

makes it possible for parenting to thrive under difficult parenting circumstances.

The role of the father in enhancing parenting cannot be underestimated. Children who lack paternal stimulation and nurturance tend to be highly vulnerable to other males who can distort reality about appropriate relationships with a male figure and thus destroy the basic trust of the child.

Parenting as a process is best determined by its outcomes since it is a lifelong process. Parenting is regarded to have been successful if the child has grown to become a responsible adult and citizen.

CHAPTER 4

EMPIRICAL STUDY

1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of the study is to explore if there is a relationship between the quality of parenting and children's vulnerability to sexual abuse. The rationale of this study is to explore if parenting contributed to the fact that children of these parents, were sexually abused. This owes to the fact that children are vulnerable to sexual abuse whilst under the watchful eye of their parents and guardians and/or in their absence. The important question is: "Why is this situation prevailing relentlessly in society in spite of all protective efforts of the parents and the state where it is warranted?" The information will be gathered through a qualitative research paradigm so as to elicit the meanings the respondents attach to the phenomenon of child sexual abuse and parenting.

2. DATA COLLECTION

The researcher used two (2) interview schedules for this study. One schedule was designed for the parents and the other for the children. The data was collected from thirteen (13) parents and twelve (12) children.

The researcher used a semi-structured interview schedule for data collection to solicit information from the respondents. This interview schedule contained a set of themes that were supported by several questions to ensure that the interview was direct and focused. The questions were asked following a particular order with all the respondents.

2.1 THE DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

The process of data collection had the following phases:

- Preparing for the interview.
- Contact with the respondents.
- Contracting.
- Termination of the data collection process.

Each of these phases will be discussed below.

2.1.1 Preparation for the interview

An in-depth study of literature was conducted before hand, and this guided the researcher in the approach of the data collection that could elicit more information on the topic under study. The critical questions that had to be answered centred on:

- Who are the subjects of this study? Are they children or parents only or both?
- What type of data collection instrument will be more relevant for the study?
- Where will the interviews take place?
- Themes and questions for the data collection instrument.

The researcher opted to use the stratified random sampling method. Through this method, the researcher made five (5) different lists per sub-area of research and randomly selected four (4) prospective subjects or respondents. Where possible, the researcher decided to interview the respondents from their respective homes to ensure that the respondents felt comfortable and that they did not feel intimidated by a structured place such as an office. Furthermore, choosing their homes was a way of giving the respondents more control in the environment.

For data collection purposes, the researcher decided to interview both parents and children so as to confirm or dispute information shared by both. For ethical reasons, no child was to be interviewed without parental consent. All subjects in the sample were

traced to their respective locations as per information contained in the larger lists in order to get permission to interview them for this study.

2.1.2 Contact with the respondents

The researcher contacted all the sampled subjects personally. The main purpose for personal contact was to explain the purpose of the research and to ask for their permission to take part in this study. It is within this phase where possible fears were allayed such as the possible re-opening of a court case and how confidentiality would be addressed.

The credentials of the researcher were spelt out to the respondents, more especially to those subjects whose contact with the researcher was the initial one. For some respondents, it was only a matter of reviving the terminated relationship. The researcher shared on how they were chosen as subjects for the research and how their information was going to be used. The researcher also dealt with the question of benefits that would be due to them if they decided to participate in the study. All minor and related questions were answered with honesty. Data collection was only done after there was informed consent.

2.1.3 Contracting for research

As explained above, informed consent had to be obtained prior to the collection of data. The subjects were given a choice to abstain from the research if they felt uncomfortable and some did so. For those who decided not to participate in the study, decision was respected. For those who agreed to share their experiences on the subject under study, further logistics were looked into such as the suitable time and day for the interview, suitable place if they did not prefer to use their homes as well as who was to be interviewed first between the parent and the child. The subjects were also reassured that all information shared will not be used to their detriment but for purposes of gaining more information and understanding of the subject. If other actions needed to be taken, that would be taken care of during the debriefing phase.

2.1.4 Termination of data collection

The termination of each interview session was done when all questions and comments were saturated or at the request of the respondent. Due to the sensitive nature of this study, debriefing was done after all interviews to ensure that respondents are left emotionally comfortable. The termination also determined further course of action if required and appropriate referrals for counselling were made.

3. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

As already mentioned in 3, two interview schedules were used separately for parents and children as subjects of this study. The parents interviewed were the parents of the children who were once reported as sexually abused in the welfare offices falling under the magisterial district of Hlanganani in the Limpopo province.

3.1   INTERVIEW SCHEDULE WITH PARENTS

3.1.1 Personal history and identifying particulars

Of the thirteen (13) parents interviewed, the age range varied between twenty (20) and fifty-two (52), twelve (12) being women and one (1) man. One parent became a parent at the age of fifteen (15) years. Six (6) parents fell within the range of thirty (30) to forty (40) years and five (5) parents were within the forty (40) to fifty (50) year range. One (1) parent fell within the fifty (50) to sixty (60) year range.

3.1.2 Marital status

 The interviewed parents themselves were in the following marital brackets: three (3) married, seven (7) cohabiting, one (1) single and two (2) widowed. From the thirteen (13) parents, nine (9) were raised by both parents, four (4) were raised by single parents due to the fact that their parents were never married, were widowed or divorced. Only one (1) parent reported that her parents cohabited.

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3.1.3 Siblings and birth order

Two (2) of the parents were found to be the eldest children, five(5) were middle children and six(6) were the youngest children within their families. Four (4) of them had 3-4 siblings, five (5) had 5-6 siblings and another three (3) had between seven (7) and seventy two (72) siblings because of the polygamous nature of their parents' marriages.

3.1.4 Education

These parents regarded themselves as illiterate because they did not progress far in terms of their education and were shy to disclose their educational levels. However one (1) parent did not go to school, five (5) left school during the junior phase (grades 1-4), four (4) dropped out at the senior primary phase (grades 5-7) and three (3) parents had junior secondary education (grades 8-10).

3.1.5 Type of family

Nine of the respondents were raised in nuclear families and four were raised in extended families. One extended family had 72 children and the father had twelve wives. The respondents shared positive experiences of being raised within their particular family setting, despite the poverty they experienced.

3.1.6 Family relationships

3.1.6.1 Past relationships

The respondents reported that they had strong family ties with a variety of family members. Most of them had positive relationships with their mothers, brothers and aunts. Others had positive relationships with both of their parents, a sister and other extended family members such as half-brother and grandparents. Some parents had strong ties with more than one person. The reason why there was a strong bond with any of the family members owes to the fact that these family members were providing for both their physical and emotional needs. Three of them confided to non-family members because they provided for their needs also.

3.1.6.2 Present relationships

Present relationships of these parents were regarded as follows:

- Seven as supportive because their parents are available to give them both emotional and physical support when it is needed. Their families of origin help with the maintenance of their families materially.
- Four as strained with all family members or a specific family member such as the mother or the father due to some unfinished business such as being forced to marry at an early age and being rejected when they needed emotional support.
- Two regarded their relationships with their parents unstable and inconsistent mostly due to alcohol abuse and domestic violence.

3.1.7 Parents' employment profile

The employment profiles of both parents of the thirteen (13) respondents were investigated. The majority of parents of the subjects worked in farms that are mostly characterized by low salaries and regarded as cheap labour. The other parents worked as factory workers and cleaners and the conditions were the same as those of farm workers. The minority of the parents were self-employed as hawkers and traditional healers. Their type of business depended on the availability of customers. Nine (9) mothers were unemployed and leaving their husbands as their bread-winner.

3.1.8 Parental Care Vs. Substitute Care

Of the thirteen parents interviewed, only four of them were always under parental care. The other nine were most often in some sort of substitute or alternative care where siblings, relatives, non-relatives and institutions had to provide for their care. One parent, due to delinquency, landed up in a reform school and another parent was left on her own with younger siblings whom she had to look after. Most of the parents indicated that their experiences with substitute carers were positive because their caregivers provided for their basic emotional and physical needs. The basic needs provided for ranged from giving them food, clothing them, attending to them emotionally as well as protecting

them physically. Only one regarded the alternative care as abusive (emotionally, sexually and materially). She was forced to leave school and go into an organized marriage at the age of fourteen years. In some situations parents were not available for the whole day, a week, a month and for longer periods. They would only be at home in the evenings, weekends, month ends or when they were on leave where possible. Supervision was minimal or not of a good quality.

3.1.9 Childhood experiences

The parents had different childhood experiences. Ten parents reported their childhood experiences to have been predominantly pleasant because their basic emotional and physical needs were met. They also reported that their parents were supportive to them. Some parents reported that their childhood was not always pleasant. This owed to the life experiences they encountered as children. The parents have experienced poverty, loss of family support, death of a parent, divorce of the parents, being raised by parents who abused alcohol and substances and being raised away from home. Four (4) parents experienced the death of one parent most especially the father. This resulted in the remaining parent raising the children single-handedly. The parents later re-married and this exposed them to the step parenthood. Three (3) parents experienced the divorce of their parents which resulted in the following circumstances: custody of the children being granted to one parent and this was mostly the mother, loss of the relationship with the father, poverty and step parenthood when the parent remarried. Four (4) parents were raised by parents who were alcohol and substance dependent. The main problem is that the father was extremely aggressive to all the family members and parenting was negatively affected. Five (5) parents have also experienced removal or separation from their families mostly due to economic reasons. The parents had to work for their children and they usually arranged that somebody else elderly should take care of them. This person was most likely to be a close relative, a neighbour or an older sibling. In extreme cases, some parents had to be institutionalized due to their uncontrollable and criminal behaviour. Alternative care also resulted in the parents dropping out of school, because their caregivers did not monitor them and in early sexual relationships and marriages.

3.1.10 Parental discipline

The discipline referred to, focused on both parents where they were available. The disciplinary methods of their parents were not always consistent. Three (3) parents used both verbal and physical methods of discipline. Eight (8) parents believed more in verbal discipline while one (1) parent was verbally abusive. Six (6) parents were more inclined to be physically punitive. The parents felt angry mostly with physically punitive and verbally abusive parents and this led to some parents seeking solace in the extended family and from friends as well as engaging in early sexual relationships. Some of these parents still hold grudges against their parents. The respondents indicated that some of them have adopted their parents' ways of discipline and some have not. Some confided that methods of discipline coincided with types of offences and previous discipline. Nine (9) parents reported that that they are more verbal with their children and if they need to follow up on something, they do so without being physical. Three (3) parents indicated that they prefer physical punishment mostly when they feel that their children are not taking them seriously and they have to show who was in control. Two (2) parents were verbally abusive. These parents have strained relationships with their own parents owing to the way they were disciplined. They are also having problems with their own children due to their parenting styles. These parents are not only verbally abusive, but are also physically punitive.

3.1.11 SEXUALITY

- **Sexual education**

Of the thirteen (13) parents interviewed, ten (10) were able to recall the dates when they had their first sexual education. The three others had the their first sexual education at the ages of eleven, fifteen and eighteen years. They received their sexual education mostly from different family members. The education was mostly received from the mother, and from relatives such as aunts and siblings. A few were made aware of sexual issues by a friend and through the initiation school. One parent reports that she never received any sexual education. The meaning attached to sexual education centred around how to deal with relationships between boys and girls, menstruation, safe and unsafe touches and

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sexual intercourse. The information given by family members was scanty but helpful when they compared it with the information given by non-family members. This owes to the closeness between family members and cultural limitations on how far a parent can discuss sexual issues with their children. This factor contributes to the necessity of initiation schools as they play a crucial role in sexual education.

- **Sexual experiences**

The majority of the parents had their first sexual experiences between the ages of sixteen (16) and twenty (20). This was a consented experience and the parents did not have a problem with it because they felt ready to allow it. One parent was engaged sexually at the age of fourteen (14) years because her parents had organized and consented to her early marriage. Although her parents had given consent, her need to grow as a child and teenager were ignored. The resultant factor is that she was very angry with her parents, felt rejected and sold to a husband who was also verbally abusive. This marriage did not succeed and she was forced to come home pregnant and her parents at the end, took over the parenting role of her child because she was not able to cope with the demands of parenting. She regards herself as having been sexually abused as a child. The other four (4) parents do not recall when they had their first sexual experiences but it was, according to them, with their consent.

- **Sexual abuse**

Out of the thirteen (13) parents interviewed, only one was sexually abused as a child through being forced into a marriage at the age of fourteen (14) years. She had no one to turn to since adults in her family organized the relationship. This marriage dissolved before the child was born because the husband was verbally abusive.

3.1.12 Parenthood.

- **Planned parenthood**

 Most of the parents reported that all pregnancies were planned except three (3). Two (2) of them were teenagers at the time and the other one (1) was mentally ill. All parents

reported that they received the support of boyfriends, spouses and family members, regardless of whether it was planned or unplanned. Only two (2) parents had problems with the birth of the children. The one parent regarded the birth of her child being the result of sexual abuse. She felt a lot of anger towards the father of the child because he was also abusing her emotionally. The other parent conceived her last child from a relationship she established after her husband's death.

- **Parental expectations**

The parents interviewed did not have problems with the gender of the conceived child. They also had no knowledge of the developmental needs of children. When their children were born, in-laws, grandparents, mothers and other significant family members had to educate them on their role as parents as well as on how to address the needs of their children.

- **Nurturance**

Nine (9) of the parents reported that their children were easy to raise from birth, and four (4) stated that the children were first easy to care for and only later became difficult due to the child's mental retardation and after the child's sexual abuse. All parents stated that they were able to detect when the child had a problem, but the problem was in responding to the child's needs. Six (6) parents confided that they were unable to respond accurately to the children's needs because of the **child's bad temperament** such as moods, cheekiness and mental retardation. Three (3) parents had mentally retarded children. Seven (7) of the parents stated that according to them, they were able to respond accurately to their children's emotional and physical needs. When the children had a need to confide, five (5) confided to their mothers, one to a fellow sibling, three (3) to relatives and four (4) to other people. The others were usually non-family members. Those parents who were unable to respond appropriately to their children's emotional needs resorted to ignoring the child, ridiculing and punishing them. Those who responded accurately were emotionally supportive and even made follow-ups to check on the extent of the child's problem. Those children who did not confide in their parents sought for a replacement inside or outside the family environment.

3.1.13 Child sexual abuse

Of the thirteen (13) parents interviewed, only six (6) were directly informed by their children. Although other children confided in their own siblings, caretaker, relatives and professionals such as police, social workers and nurses, out of the thirteen (13) parents, eleven (11) believed them. Only two (2) parents had difficulties in believing their children's story. Parental reactions ranged from providing support, to anger directed towards the child and abuser, rejection, indifference, over protection, vigilance and warm-hostile attitudes. Most of the perpetrators were known and trusted by the family.

3.1.14 Profile of the perpetrator

Six (6) of the twelve (12) children were sexually abused by their mother's live-in boyfriends, three (3) of them by their neighbours and each of the remaining three (3) children was molested by their biological father, foster brother, mother's cousin, nephew and by a police officer. All the perpetrators were people that were close and trusted by the parents because of their relationship and the official duties that they performed in society.

3.1.15 Economic factors

Eight (8) parents were found to be unemployed. This group relied on live-in boyfriends, family and welfare aid. From this group, six (6) were maintained by their live-in boyfriends, and four by family, including spouses, in-laws and siblings. Four (4) parents relied on welfare grants in the form of child support and disability grants for a specific child or parent in the family. A majority of those parents regarded themselves as poor. Only a few were "just managing" from hand to mouth type of existence.

3.1.16 Care arrangements

 A majority of these parents are either unemployed or self-employed. Care arrangements were primarily necessitated due to the families' economic positions. Of the two who are working, children are left under the care of an adult relative or an older child. The working parents reported that they only supervise the children when they are at home

after work, daily or monthly. Other care arrangements were necessitated because of domestic violence that ultimately led to separation from the spouse.

3.1.17 Housing, intergenerational and personal boundaries

 Eight (8) parents own the accommodation they are using. The number of rooms ranges between one and two. This accommodation was regarded as not enough by the nine (9) respondents as it denied them their personal privacy. It is difficult to enforce intergenerational and personal boundaries around the clock in this home. At times, parents share a single room with mature and different gender children. At some point, parents are forced to arrange accommodation with willing relatives and neighbours for the older children. Ten (10) parents stated that they are still able to enforce boundaries within their environment. Four (4) of the parents live in family houses and one lived with a boyfriend.

3.1.18 Environmental factors

- **Location**

 All parents interviewed are predominantly from rural areas. Six (6) parents regarded their area as safe while four (4) of them regarded their area as hostile owing to high rates of assault, incest, rape, ritual murders and hostile neighbours. It was highlighted that in these hostile areas, it is not safe to walk alone or send a child anywhere unaccompanied. The neighbours are regarded as hostile because even where they should be helpful, they prefer not to become involved. Four (4) of the parents regarded their area as being neither hostile nor safe.

- **Support systems**

Families of origin were regarded as the most supportive to the respondents and this included the supportive role of grandparents. Neighbours were also regarded as highly supportive when it came to providing support but spouses were rated low in this regard. The people referred to above were regarded as supportive because they were available when they needed emotional support due to a variety of life's stresses. Some parents were

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still living in the family of origin's homes whereas they should be already independent. Nine (9) respondents regarded their relationships as hostile and strained because of their failure to provide physical and emotional nurturance to their children. Some respondents received their support from more than one source and this enabled them to cope better since they knew they could rely on other people for support in times of a crisis. The supportive role that is played by the significant others also extended to help with parental responsibilities, such as providing alternate care when the parent was not around.

3.1.19 Alcohol and substance use

Nine (9) respondents do not use any intoxicating substances. Four (4) parents reported that they do consume alcohol. Some parents interviewed did not regard their own parents' abuse of alcohol and substances, as detrimental to their own upbringing.

3.1.20 Criminal Activities

Five (5) parents have been involved in criminal activities as children and as adults. Out of the five parents four of them are mothers. One parent has been sent to a reform school for theft and aggressive behaviour towards others. Her own child who is the subject in this study, has been in children homes twice. The other three mothers were in prison for cases of domestic violence and assault. One mother had to raise her child in prison. The fifth parent is a father who was in prison for domestic violence.

3.1.21 Stressors and their effects

The respondents have highlighted the following stressors in their lives, namely, single parenthood (2), poverty and poor economic conditions (5), inadequate housing (1), poor relationships with the spouses (2), parenting a child with mental retardation (3), failure to handle the victimized child and domestic violence (4). Some parents had more than one stressor in their lives. The resultant effects of the poor living conditions are as follows:

- The single parent is forced to look for employment somewhere. Readily available work is mostly in the family homes and on the farms. As farm and domestic

workers, the parents are not always at home and substitute care is needed for their children.

- Due to poor economic conditions and unemployment, domestic violence becomes more prevalent and this affects parenting. In extreme cases, mothers are forced to run away for their safety and often leave their children behind with the abusive father.

- Most parents confessed to their failure to deal with the sexually abused child. Some consider their children as uncontrollable and respond with physical punishment, verbal abuse or ignoring the child. Some are supportive but get frustrated since they do not know how they should offer their support for the child.

3.1.22 Other information

Parents reported that the following behaviours were manifested after the sexual abuse of their children:

- Uncontrollable and aggressive.
- Ran away from home for prostitution at the age of fourteen years, fell pregnant and is HIV positive. Child's precise whereabouts are unknown.
- Child abandoned own baby.
- Child is pregnant at fifteen and intends to get married to the teenage, unemployed father of the unborn child.
- Child is cohabiting with mother's ex live-in boyfriend who is also the perpetrator.
- Child is still not believed.
- Child victim is mentally retarded.
- Parent cannot deal successfully with the child victim.
- Child was sexually abused once, twice or four times by different people.
- Eleven of the cases were withdrawn from court due to alleged lack of convincing evidence. In some cases the victim's families interfered.

3.2 INTERVIEW SCHEDULE WITH THE CHILDREN

3.2.1 Identifying particulars

The children interviewed were of ages ranging between seven (7) and eighteen (18) years. Four (4) children were between the ages of seven (7) and twelve (12) years, seven (7) children between the ages of thirteen (13) and sixteen (16), and one (1) child was seventeen (17) years old.

3.2.2 Educational status

The children had reached the following grades at the time they were interviewed: nine children had elementary/primary school grades of one (1) to grades (6) and four had gone up to grade nine (9). Five (5) of the children had dropped out of school and reasons for this were: mental retardation (2), teenage pregnancy (1), cohabiting with mother's boyfriend (1) and prostitution (1).

3.2.3 Mental status

 Three of the children in this study were mentally retarded. These children did not progress well at school and had limited capacities to take care of themselves personally due to their mental conditions. Parents were finding it difficult to constantly monitor their movements since these children had a tendency to roam around and had less fear for people in general. However, despite their poor academic history, the parents try to teach these children some basic life skills such as personal care and hygiene, to be afraid of strangers, not to walk alone and to report immediately when something happens to them. This is done so that these children can be in a position to protect themselves even if it is on a minimal scale.

3.2.4 Type of family

Ten (10) children reported that their parents are married. Four (4) of these families were nuclear families with both parents. The other six (6) families were reconstructed families with a stepfather or mother's live-in boyfriend. The last three (3) were single parent

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families that are headed by the mother. Family composition information revealed that most parents regarded as married, were reconstructed families with a stepfather. The nuclear families in this context were those with stepfathers/live-in boyfriends, mother and siblings. Furthermore, most of the families were big with at least six (6) members and more. The majority of these family members are children with a grandmother, an aunt or an uncle as an external family member.

3.2.5 Birth order

The birth of the children interviewed was as follows: four (4) were first-born, two (2) were second-born, three (3) were third-born, two (2) were fourth-born and two (2) were last born.

3.2.6 Family relationships.

3.2.6.1 Support systems

Six (6) children reported that they had positive relationships with their mothers, two (2) with their brothers, one (1) with the sister, one (1) with the father and one (1) with no one. Other people who were regarded highly important by the children as far as family relationships are concerned, are from the extended family such as the maternal grandparents (5), grandparents generally (3) and a stepfather (1). They reported that family relations were also influenced by the nature of the need the children had at that time, since different family members fulfilled different functions in their lives.

The children gave more or less the same versions on the reasons why some family members were the most preferred persons in their lives and formulated them as follows:

- Physical care: provision of food, clothes and general care.
- Emotional care: comforting them when they were ill and gave them love in the presence and absence of their parents.
- Protection, advice and encouragement.

Three (3) children reported that their relationships with their parents were strained because their parents were:

- Rejecting, cold, hostile, not protective and abusive to them.
- Inconsistent in their responses (warm-hostile).
- Fathers rejected the needs of the daughters and responded rather to the needs of their sons.
- Rejection by biological parents and the child became stuck with the abuser.
- Verbally and physically abusive.

Of the three (3) children, the first child was abused by her uncle, who provided alternative care for her because of recurring domestic violence within her own family. This child is now pregnant by another teenage boy. The second child is now cohabiting with the mother's ex-boyfriend while the third child is involved in fulltime prostitution, had a baby at thirteen (13) years of age and is HIV positive. She has abandoned her child under the care of her mother's sister.

3.2.7 Economic factors

The economic situation of both parents in the family was screened where applicable. Eight (8) parents were reported to be unemployed, three (3) as self-employed and four (4) as employed. Parents who were unemployed relied on the mother's live-in boyfriend/stepfather, extended family and welfare grants or assistance of any kind in form of food parcels.

3.2.8 Care arrangements

Only six (6) children were in some form of alternative care during their childhood. The reasons for being placed under alternate care are as follows: parent(s) working far from home, domestic violence which resulted in separation of the parents, parental rejection, sexual abuse in the family and lack of adequate accommodation. The settings of care ranged from extended families, children's homes and children left on their own due to lack of a caregiver. Some children had found themselves in several care arrangements

over a period of time. In cases where children were left on their own, an older sibling was usually in charge. Most of the children reported pleasant experiences of being placed in alternate care but a few reported further abuse (verbal, physical and sexual). With nowhere to go, the children were stuck with their abusers until their parents provided another alternative care.

3.2.9 Childhood experiences

 Eight (8) out of twelve (12) children reported their childhood experiences as pleasant and four (4) as unpleasant. Some of the children who reported their childhood as pleasant or unpleasant, highlighted that their experiences were influenced by circumstances within the family which depended on who was taking care of them. Children reported experiences of poverty, abuse, domestic violence, removal, abandonment and death of a sibling or parent. The effects of their life experiences are sadness, anger, bitterness, rejection, feeling lost, rebelliousness, running away from home, loss of future, loss of trust, feelings of betrayal and resentment. Six (6) children reported that their fathers abused alcohol and their intake affected the parenting process negatively. Two (2) children reported that their stepfathers abused both alcohol and dagga, while in some situations both parents were abusing alcohol. In all circumstances of abuse of dependency producing substances (alcohol and dagga), parenting was seriously or negatively affected. The effects on parenting can be summarised as follows:

- Domestic violence, which led to disability of a sibling.
- Children were chased away from home by using dangerous weapons.
- Mothers failed to protect the children against any form of abuse.
- Children prefer to be out of home when the abusive parent is present.
- Parents are unable to offer guidance to the children.

3.2.10   Discipline

The children regarded their parents' approach to discipline as uninvolved, physically punitive, verbally punitive, and some both verbally and physically punitive.

3.2.11 Sexual Education

All the children interviewed have received some type of sexual education. They have received it from friends and family members (including parents). The age at which they received this education varies between seven (7) and fifteen (15) years of age. Five (5) received sexual education between the ages of seven (7) and twelve (12), another five (5) received it between the ages of thirteen (13) and fifteen (15) years and the last two do not know when they received their sexual education. They were taught about their gender (being girls), how to take care of themselves in their relationship with males, safe and unsafe touching and menstruation. The children were not comfortable to discuss this sexuality with the researcher during the interviews.

3.2.12 Abuse Experience

The children reported that they had their first sexual experiences during the abuse between the ages of seven (7) and fifteen (15) years. All twelve (12) reported that their experiences were under duress by known people such as uncles (3), stepfathers (3), neighbours (2), a foster brother (1), biological brother (1), cousins (2) and by a police official whilst placed for protection in the police station. Only three (3) of these children had sexual experiences with unknown people. Of the twelve (12) children, five (5) were re-victimized by known people within their families such as fathers, brothers and stepfathers. These children were re-victimized more than twice before they disclosed the abuse.

3.2.13 Parental response to the abuse

 The children confided in a wide range of people regarding their experience of sexual abuse. They confided in clinic nurses (2), welfare officials (2), police officers (1), paternal or maternal aunts (4), a sister-in-law (1), a grandmother (1), a brother (1) and two (2) did not tell anyone. Some children confided in more than one person. Almost all the children but two (2) were believed and supported when they disclosed their abuse. Some parents even believed that the child had seduced the perpetrator or fabricated the

story. In some cases the child was first believed, but the confession was later doubted by the parents.

3.2.14 Background to sexual abuse

The children reported the following different stories surrounding how they became victims of sexual abuse:

- Abused by the biological brother under whose care she was placed when their mother was at work during the week.
- Abused by the stepfather who told her that a sexual relationship between them was not considered as taboo since she was not his daughter.
- Sexually abused by a police official whilst kept in a police station as place of safety pending a children's court enquiry, that would determine alternative care arrangements.
- Abused by the mother's boyfriend after a grooming process had taken place over a long period of time. The child was given favours more than the mother and was later allowed to visit the perpetrator without her mother's company or supervision. The child was also free to go to the perpetrator's place whenever there was a conflict between the child and her mother and regarded him as a protector rather than an abuser. The mother was both verbally and physically aggressive towards the child. The child finally moved in with the abuser.
- A neighbour offered two children some sweets and abused them thereafter.
- Called by an unknown person who offered food as she was crossing a deserted area with a friend. Due to hunger they responded.
- Dangerous weapons were used to coerce the child into sexual activities.
- Abused by an uncle in the aunt's absence.
- Were left alone as children within a family system, where the foster brother raped her.
- A stepfather repeatedly came to her room to molest her. He instructed her to remove the key of the bedroom after locking it, so that he could gain access through his spare key. The child was gagged so that she could not scream.

- Parents were divorced and she was under the mother's custody. When she had a conflict with the mother, she went to her father's place for protection and was abused by the father.

3.2.15 Housing

Most children reported that they were living in their homes except two, who lived at the grandparents' place or at a place belonging to the mother's boyfriend. Most respondents indicated that their accommodation was not adequate because of the following reasons:

- One room is used as a bedroom at night and as a kitchen cum living room, during the day. At night all family members pass through the room.
- A single room is shared by siblings of different gender with no privacy.
- Children are forced to spend nights with neighbours and relatives, due to a lack of accommodation.

3.2.16 Environment

Most of the children regarded their neighbourhoods as unsafe because of the presence of one or more of the following in the family: incest, rape, ritual murders, domestic violence, alcoholic and substance dependent parents, continuous sexual abuse by known people, theft and hostile neighbours. A number of children regarded their environment as safe and supportive because they could rely on neighbours, friends and family for material and emotional support.

3.2.17 Stressors in the child's life

The children pointed out the following stressors in their lives:

- Poverty: their parents are unemployed and they struggle to provide for their basic needs on a daily basis.
- Continuous abuse by known and trusted people.
- Substitute parenting.
- Pending court cases against the perpetrators of sexual abuse.

4. RESEARCHER'S CONCLUSION ON THE EMPIRICAL DATA
COLLECTED

From the empirical study, the researcher has come to the following conclusions:

4.1 Parental factors

The researcher has through this study confirmed that t**he age of the parents** played a crucial role in parenting. Blum and Goldhagen (in Louw et al, 1998:410) describe parenting by teenagers as a **syndrome of failure** because of the following: failure to fulfill adolescent functions, failure to remain at school, failure to limit the family size, failure to establish a vocation and become self supporting and failure to have children who reach their potential in life. All the parent subjects in this study were adolescents when they became parents for the first time. They confirmed that they did not have knowledge of childrearing and they were educated on parenting by their significant others. Martin and Corbeck (1997:284-288) state that some teenage or child parents try to escape from their own unhappy background by forming relationships with someone of the same age and background. The study also confirmed that some marriages amongst teenagers were marriages of convenience. Subjects confessed that they had lost hope in their academic future and their parents' ability to provide for them financially and emotionally, felt trapped in a marriage she did not bargain to be involved in and hence the failure to raise that child and the abandonment of another.

4.2 Family relationships

Haynes-Seman and Baumgarten (1994:2-3) have identified three (3) basic needs for children that need to be provided for by the parents as they pass through all the developmental stages, namely, the need for nurturance, stimulation and protection. This statement was confirmed by the study. Both the parents and the children maintained positive relationships with family members who provided for their physical and emotional needs. The study further depicted that mothers were rated highly by their children when it came to the provision and maintenance of family relationships. The respondents commended the supportive role of the parents' family of origin and

neighbours. Strained family relationships were reported against adults who displayed the following behaviours towards their children: failure to provide for the children's basic needs, parental rejection and neglect, parents who communicated hostility as well as inconsistency in responses and control. Scazioni (1995:27-28) confirms the latter statement and states that children need assurance of the safety of the environment and protection from abuse by their parents. Controneo and Moriarty (1992:296) state that if parents did not receive care and devotion from their own family background, the unmet expectations of care and devotion will be assigned to friends, partners and children. This study confirmed this statement but also noted that when family members failed to acknowledge and respond to a child's basic needs, the child can also satisfy those unmet needs outside the family. The study confirmed further that the child's pressing needs might expose a child to abusive adults. Some children were given some sweets and food prior to the sexual assault. The study also observed a close relationship between parenting by biological parents, seeking for alternate care arrangements and children's exposure to sexual abuse. Fraenkel (2002:1) as well as Charen (unknown:2-4) have identified the positive role played by fathers in parenting in the sense that they protect their families and teach their sons and daughters, appropriate gender issues as well as how to respond to them. In this study, it was observed that most of the children were raised in the absence of their biological fathers due to the fact that parents are not married, divorced, deceased or separated. Due to the absence of the biological father within the family, it was found that the father figure had been replaced by the mother's live-in boyfriend or a stepfather. In some desperate cases such as when the mother had to work far from home, children were left in alternative care to ensure that the parenting role is continued. In severe cases, the law intervened by placing the children in children's homes and reform schools. In this study, it was confirmed that if a parent did not get love, support and appreciation as a child, that parent would fail to provide it him/herself because they will not know how. It was also discovered that both the parent and the child have been institutionalized due to lack of proper parenting. The child parent in the study also abandoned her own child. This becomes a generational problem of ineffective parenting as confirmed by Clifford-Poston's (2001:9) statement that children learn how to become parents in their own families. The study also found that the presence of support systems such as in-laws, grandparents and neighbours often had to replace the parenting role of the biological

parent. It came as a concern to the researcher to realize that there are children who have no one to confide in and it became even more difficult when the child was mentally retarded.

4.3 Economic status

The researcher has through this study observed that there seems to be a intergenerational link in the types of jobs and income earned by the parents in this study and their parents. They were still attracted to low-income jobs because of their level of education. The economic status of the family was found through this study to be linked to the type of **parental or substitute care** children are exposed to. The study also found that most of the children were left under substitute care and that they experienced sexual abuse within the family, lack of adequate accommodation as well as lack of consistent supervision from parents. Lown (2001:2) highlights that the absence of a relationship, more especially with the father, may expose children to abusive adults because they hunger for male attention. Lown further states that this becomes a reality because children are naturally trusting and curious and they enjoy the affection and attention of adults. This study also confirmed Burgess' (1992:118) observation that children who run away from home for various reasons can easily become victims of sexual abuse. One child ran away from the custodian parent to the non-custodian parent for protection who abused the child. The study also confirmed the role played by an older child in the family with regard to parenting as a caregiver, and this forces the older child to mature faster and the needs of this child are compromised

4.4 Type of family

Nine (9) of the parents were raised in original nuclear families and four (4) were raised in extended families. As far as the children were concerned, nine (9) were raised in nuclear families and three (3) in extended families. The children were raised in some type of reconstructed nuclear families where the biological father was absent. The researcher observed that the type of family played a crucial role not only in terms of providing material and emotional support to the family, but also in terms of passing on information about sexuality. The study found that sexual education was introduced to the children by

various key and minor members of the nuclear and extended families**.** The role players were mothers, relatives, siblings, initiation schools and friends

4.5 Childhood experiences

This study found that those parents and children who reported positive childhood experiences had their basic needs met consistently by caregivers. It was also discovered that the experiences were influenced by circumstances within the family as well as by those who were taking care of the children. The study found some similarities between childhood experiences of the parents and those of the children as highlighted by Glaser and Frosh (1993:19-25), American Psychological Association (2001:1) as well as Browne and Finkelhor (1986:66-77). Parents reported that they were exposed to poverty, loss of family support, involvement in early sexual relationships and marriages, loss of a relationship with a father, step-parenthood, dropping out of school and institutionalization. Children reported experiences of poverty, abuse, domestic violence, removal, abandonment and death of a sibling or parent. The effects of these experiences are sadness, anger, bitterness, feelings of loss, rebelliousness, running away from home, loss of future, loss of trust, and feelings of betrayal and resentment. This study also confirmed the negative effects of substance abuse on parenting. The effects of substance abuse and domestic violence on the parenting process, were clearly demonstrated. This confirmed Holden's (1997:160) observation that the capacity of parents who abuse substances, were negatively affected.

4.6 Parenting styles

From this study the researcher confirmed Clifford-Poston's (2001:9) statement that children learn to be parents from their own families of origin. The researcher observed that this statement was also true as far as the style of parenting and method of discipline that a parent will choose to adopt. From this study it became clear that most parents have adopted their parents' parenting styles as well as their methods of discipline. For example, most parents preferred talking to using physical punishment. What could not be clearly established is whether the parents were constructive or abusive in their verbal approach. However, children stated that their parents were verbally abusive. Some

parents were observed to have tried to adjust their parents' way of discipline and this ended being a mix of both the physical and the verbal approaches to discipline and punishment. The study also confirmed that children raised by abusive parents also abused their children and if this cycle is not broken somewhere, this could become an intergenerational cycle of abuse. Children confirmed their parents' approach to discipline as mostly non-involved, and verbally and physically punitive.

4.7 Child Factors

Certain factors within the child may cause parenting to be more difficult than is imagined. Holden (1997:55) and Soul Kurry (2002:1) agree that raising a problem child presents challenges, complications and burdens for the parents in terms of care, finances, time and emotional demands. Chess and Thomas (in Louw et al. 1998:164 and 120) state that a problem child does not adjust to daily routine, and is difficult to control and to comfort. The study confirmed that children with mental conditions or disorders are vulnerable to sexual abuse. This owes to their limited cognitive abilities and the parents' lack of knowledge on how to raise and control them. Tomison (1996:3-4) states that parenting can be affected by the presence of psychological factors and disorders that may impair the individual's general functioning and may also contribute to positive or negative childrearing. The study further confirmed that children of parents who had psychological disorders were vulnerable to sexual abuse because the parents were not in a position to protect them as they also failed to take charge of their own lives.

4.8 Sexual education

The study confirmed that the age at which sexual issues were introduced to both parents and their children varies. The parents were introduced to sexual issues and experiences later than their own children and most of them had consented sex. The study observed that the children were introduced to sexual issues during their primary school years when they were still too young to understand what their own sexuality entails and their first encounter of sex was coercive and traumatic. This study simply confirmed that child sexual abuse is statutory rape because the Sexual Offences Act of 1957 prohibits any sexual activity between an older person and a child under the age of twelve (12) years.

Furthermore the Act regards sexual interaction with a child less than sixteen (16) years of age as guilty of a sexual offence. This study also proved the prevalence of sexual abuse amongst children as an issue that requires more focus and attention. The study also depicted that initiation schools played a crucial role in sexual matters, since they imparted basic information about sexuality that parents were not comfortable to share with their children, because of taboo issues.

4.9 Sexual abuse and the settings

Doyle (1994:28) states that there are a considerable number of settings in which child sexual abuse can take place such as within the family, community as well as in institutional settings by known and unknown people. This study underlines the fact that the setting of child sexual abuse is mainly the place where the child is taken care of and this does not necessarily refer to the child's home. This refers to time spent in alternative care with relatives or non-relatives within the child's home or in those people's own homes. Furthermore, Interpol (2003:1), Newton (2001:1-2) and Scheepers (1994:9) add that the perpetrators are mostly adults who are known and to some extent trusted by the children and their parents and who are in positions of authority or influence such as parents, relatives, teachers, foster parents, baby-sitters and boarding masters. The study confirmed that these sexually abused children were abused by their uncles, stepfathers, neighbours, a foster brother, a biological brother and by a child protection official. Most of these children are abused by their mother's live-in boyfriends or their stepfathers. The study further confirmed Glasser and Frosh's (1993:16) statement that children are generally not safe with supposedly safe people in supposedly safe places and that strategies used by perpetrators to get their victims, have not changed. Potgieter (2000:117-118), Doyle (1994:24-25) and Interpol (2003:1) agree that perpetrators usually take time before they molest a child. They make sure that they gain the trust of the intended child victim as well as the significant others. This is done until parents or caregivers feel comfortable to leave the child in their care. The unknown people also follow the same grooming process but their work is easier because they only have to win the child's trust. Doyle (1994:33) and Burgess (1992:118) state that the approach used by the perpetrator will mainly depend on what the child's pressing needs are and on the form

of stimuli the child responding to. In this study the strangers lured the children through giving them food and sweets. The study found that force is only used as a method to ensure that the abuse, is kept a secret. The study also confirmed that sexual abuse is high-risk sex and leads to high-risk pregnancies, high risk parenthood and may lead also to HIV/AIDS. The study also confirmed that a sexually abused child has more chances of being re-victimized and that some children were victimized up to four (4) times by different people.

4.10 Parental response to disclosure about sexual abuse

The reaction of the parent to the disclosure of sexual abuse was observed to be closely related to the past and present relationship of the parent and the child as well as the abuser. Doyle (1994:202-204) pointed out that children need adults who will listen and offer support during the process of disclosure. This may include believing the child as well as encouraging the child to talk about the abuse. Hollely (2002:14) indicates that the initial reaction to the child's disclosure of an abusive experience, will have an effect on the child's well-being at that point in time but also in the future. The study confirmed the value of providing support to the child once the child has disclosed sexual abuse, and that children who were believed after they disclosed the sexual abuse, exhibited less adjustment or behavioural problems than the ones who were not believed. The children whose disclosures were not believed were laden with feelings of anger, guilt, and loss of trust for others and were isolated. Haugaard and Reppucci (1998:225-227) have noted that the disclosure of the sexual abuse affects the parents as well as the children. The reactions and conflicts experienced by the parents in this study ranged from failure to provide support, anger directed towards the child and the abuser, rejection, indifference, over-protection and a warm-hostile attitude. The study also proved that the disclosure of abuse posed another challenge to the parents, namely, the failure to deal with the victimized child.

4.11 Level of education

Martin and Corbeck (1997:14) state that **the economic status of the family** is reflected through the parent's education, income and occupation. They assert that poverty creates a high-risk context for parenting because of low income, poor housing and overcrowding as well as limited work opportunities. This statement was confirmed by the study. Almost all parents interviewed were semi-literate and only three (3) went to secondary school. The working parents were classified within the low-income bracket, as they were domestic workers, farm labourers and some were self-employed. The income they earn does not afford them the luxury of building decent and adequate housing since they struggle with putting a meal on the table if possible.

4.12 Marital status

Thompson and Rudolph (2000: 449-450) point out that the economic status of the family is closely linked to **the marital status of the parents**. Single and divorced parents are, according to these authors, the most affected since they have minimal or no financial support from their partners. Most of the parents were not married although they were in some type of relationship. Furthermore the mothers were unemployed and they depended on their live-in boyfriends, spouses, extended families and welfare assistance for material support. The researcher also noted that more children are being brought up outside the nuclear family system **than** was the situation with their parents.

4.13 Housing factors

Thompson and Rudolph (2000:456-457), Clifford-Poston (2001:11) as well as Scazioni (1995:27-28) agree that the bigger the family, the worse the incidence of overcrowding. According to these authors, overcrowding contributes to lack of space and privacy amongst family members. In this study, both parents and children affirmed that inadequate accommodation affected their personal boundaries and privacy to some extent. In some cases children of different gender and age were forced to share the available room. Where it was regarded as unsafe to share the space, accommodation was sought for the children from willing neighbours and relatives. The researcher found that

some parents blamed their lack of adequate accommodation and finances to be the causal factor of their children's sexual abuse. These situations definitely minimize the opportunities of parents to provide proper care for their children and definitely place their children at risk. Proper and meaningful nurturing, which can contribute to the prevention of sexual abuse, is nearly impossible in the above situations.

4.14 Other stressors

It was surprising to note that both the parents and children have more or less the same **stressors** that affect their daily functioning such as poor economic and living conditions, unemployment, domestic violence, inadequate accommodation, single parenthood, raising a child with a mental disorder, failure to handle the victimized child, re-victimization by known and trusted people, substitute parenting and a pending court case regarding the sexual abuse. Families struggled to provide for the basic needs of their children such as food and adequate shelter as well as offering continuous and consistent supervision and discipline to their children, because of the parents' working conditions. Their employment calls for arrangements of alternative care. Most of the respondents were concerned about the pending case of sexual abuse because their cases were dismissed due to lack of convincing evidence in courts. The dragging of the cases contributed further to the lack of closure to the emotional trauma the children and their families are experiencing. Some feared that if the cases were re-opened, they would be in trouble with their families because the abuse was treated as a private family matter.

5 CONCLUSION

The sexual abuse of children is a problem that is more serious than it is realized. The age of the victim is lower which makes it possible for the perpetrator to groom the child as he/she pleases. The sexual abuse of children affects the family more, most especially the parenting process is undermined considerably. This is mostly due to the fact that society still distances itself from acknowledging the sexual abuse phenomenon as a severe social problem. The realization that a child has been molested brings mixed emotions to both the victim and their parents. The most common feelings expressed are feelings of guilt, anger towards the self and others, rejection, lack of knowledge of how to deal with the

victimized child and an internal struggle of whether to believe the child's story or not. This internal battle as well as other external factors impact negatively on the position of the parent to provide care, support and adequate and consistent protection. The family relationships and the presence of other support systems are observed to be extremely crucial in ensuring that children recover from the abuse. Although there are many factors that contribute to the fact that a child can be sexual abused, it is clear that there is a link between the way a child is nurtured by his or her parents and sexual abuse. If a child feels safe and protected through the parenting process, such a child will not be easily drawn into an abusive sexual relationship with a known or an unknown person. The main reason for the latter is that a child will feel emotionally so safe that he or she can more easily protect him/herself from the abuse. However, in some cases mostly where violence is used as part of the sexual abuse process, emotional safety will not be enough to protect the child.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. INTRODUCTION

Parenting is one of the most challenging roles ever assigned to mankind. Put simplistically, it refers to raising a child to become a responsible adult and citizen. There is no school where parenting is taught, therefore there are no fixed guidelines to be followed regarding how to become the best parent. Informally parents learn through observation from their own parents. For those who are fortunate to be able to read, there are volumes of books and magazines that have been written on the subject to assist those who aspire and those who are already parents. The tips and guidelines still do not equip any parent with perfect skills to deal with daily challenges they face with their children. Parenting can never be fully mastered since it is a lifetime career that unfolds and matures as both child and parent progress through each developmental stage of childhood and parenting. This means that with each day a parent learns new things about parenting. This is the case whether your children are still toddlers, teenagers or adults.

The most crucial roles of parenting are socialization, stimulation and protection. Through socialization, the parent educates the child about social norms, loyalty to the self, family and culture, being a good child and other aspects that will ensure that a child is groomed to be self-reliant. Being a parent, also entails that a parent should prepare the child to engage with other children and adults. As the parent negotiates to extend the child's world of interaction, the parent must simultaneously negotiate and test the safety of the new environment to ensure that the child is continually protected beyond the realm of the family.

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Through encouraging the child to associate with the extended network of people ranging from siblings, fathers, uncles, neighbours, kindergarten and involvement in camping outings, the parents are encouraging the children to extend their trust as well. The biggest challenge that can face parents, is to educate their children about safe and unsafe personal boundaries and to maintain it. This is crucial since children generally trust other people. Teaching them about personal boundaries ensures that children can be more protective towards themselves, when their boundaries are threatened.

The protective role of parents is always been put on the spotlight, as children are sexually abused by known and unknown people. This is a reality, whether the parents are present or not. The phenomenon of child sexual abuse is one social problem that is adversely affecting all parties related to the victim. Child sexual abuse undermines the protective role of parents because it is mostly a predetermined activity that follows an extensive grooming process of the targeted victim. The grooming process is undertaken to gain the trust of the intended victim and the parents. It ensures that the perpetrator is given access within the boundaries of the child. When entry has been gained, the perpetrator encroaches on the inner layers that are private. This leaves a child not safe since the boundaries are now damaged, which implies that the child is no longer safe with the perpetrator. The question then is whether parents are aware of the fact that they have to teach their children to protect themselves. This is usually not the case since parents believe in training children to respect older people but still fail to warn their children when it is okay not to comply with adult's instructions. This includes instructions pertaining to restricted activities such as fondling.

2. LIMITATIONS TO THE STUDY

Although the study was carried out successfully, it had some limitations that are worthy to be noted:

- The study was a small-scale study as only 13 parents and 12 children were interviewed. Some families could not be located and some refused to be part of the study.

- Due to the absence of fathers in the families, the parent subjects were predominantly women.

- The child subjects were only girls.

- Due to the sensitivity of the study, the subjects were sometimes reluctant to share their experiences.

3. CONCLUSIONS OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

Parenting is a lifetime career that is mostly assessed through its outcomes. Parents take pride when they have raised their children to become responsible adults who are able to carry forward their aspirations. The phenomenon of child sexual abuse usually undermines the parenting role since it does not affect the victim alone, but the parents and the rest of the family system as well.

Through this study, the researcher came to the following conclusions:

- The research statement namely that there are a possible relation between the quality of parenting skills and the vulnerability of children to sexual abuse, is been confirmed through this study. Most of the respondents did not receive the quality of nurturing from their parents to prevent that they would become more easily victims of sexual abuse.

- Child sexual abuse undermines the protective role of parents through gaining the trust of the parents first and later the child. Perpetrators take their time with the grooming process before the completely trusting child is violated.

- Perpetrators are still predominantly male, known and trusted people. This makes it difficult for protective or vigilant parents to suspect or expect that people that they trusted completely, may abuse their children.

- The perpetrator targets smaller children because of their trusting nature, and because of the fact that they are easy to convince and they do enjoy the love and attention of adults.

- The age at which children are targeted for sexual abuse, is the primary school phase. The children at this age, is still not mature enough to sense that they may be in danger when the grooming process of the sexual abuse is taking place.

- Parenting as a process does not directly expose children to sexual abuse, but the presence of various factors that are inherent in the child, the parents and the parenting environment indirectly, make a child more vulnerable to sexual abuse.

- The maturity of the parent plays a critical role in the success of the parenting process. Parenting by a teenager is high-risk parenting since teenagers still need to be parented themselves. They still do not have the knowledge and skills to raise children. The inadequacy of teenage parents can be supplemented by a strong support system of parents and grandparents.

- The presence of a strong and consistent support system that extends beyond the family system including neighbours and other relatives, ensure that the challenge of parenting becomes more manageable.

- Children are less vulnerable to sexual abuse if they experience the necessary nurturing. Parents and families of origin, are rated highly to provide this nurturing.

- The presence of good neighbours is also appreciated since they also relieve the stress caused by parenting. The latter can be achieved by also attending to the needs that should be provided by direct family members, during a crises.

- Failure to deal with the victimized child due to a variety of conflicts experienced by the parent and the child after the disclosure of the sexual abuse, may unintentionally render a child vulnerable to further abuse. Lack of support, avoiding or ignoring the child after the disclosure, can lead to the fact that children can start looking for love and support outside the family system.

- The age, the educational, marital and economic status of the parent, were found to be interdependent. The presence of one of it had a direct or an indirect influence on the other. The age of the parent will in general indicate what type of resources the parent possesses. The absence of work opportunities will impact on the living conditions of

that family. The contribution of the spouse to family maintenance makes a difference to the household. If the parents are not married and there is no maintenance agreement, the custodian parent has no option but to raise his/her children on their own with minimal resources.

- The age of the parent determined the parent's level of education as well as the type of job she/he would get. This is due to the fact that low skilled jobs require the lowest level of education or none. Furthermore, people in low skilled jobs earn less than their educated counterparts.

- The marital status of the parents influenced the emotional and financial contributions and commitments of the parents towards their children. The single parent either due to the unmarried status, death, separation or divorce, exposes children to new male figures in their lives. The presence of stepfathers or mother's live-in boyfriends, often exposes children to be sexually abused. This does not mean that it counts for all stepfathers and boyfriends.

- The status given to the father figure in the family usually undermines and distorts realities of where the mother should direct her loyalties. This is a conflict situation in itself likely to breed an environment for sexual abuse due to conflicting loyalties. Failure to believe the disclosure of the child, can be a breeding ground for further abuse.

- The role of the biological father in parenting is crucial in order to serve as a positive role model for masculinity and sexuality to both daughters and sons.

- Inadequate accommodation affects boundaries between family members. On the other hand, seeking for alternative accommodation from willing neighbours and relatives, can expose children to further possible abuse.

- Children often become an extension of parenting. There is no way it can be avoided since it is not always possible for the parent to be available due to ill-health, death, separation, divorce and employment. The role played by the eldest children in the family is a crucial one since they ensure that basic parenting roles are performed in the absence of one or both parents. Parentification only becomes problematic when the needs of parentified children, are neglected because of the selfish needs of adults who fail to act as parents.

- The court system still fails to bring effective closures to all court cases of sexual abuse, due to alleged insufficient evidence and at times, withdrawal of cases by complainants. This leads perpetrators to refine their methods of child sexual abuse and to ensure that the child never discloses the abuse to caring adults. The healing process is also delayed or stunted, since there was no conclusion to the case either through mediation or through a court judgement.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Sexual abuse of children is not a new phenomenon. The family and societal institutions such as Child Protection Units and courts, are still challenged on how the children can be protected in the best way. Ideally, children should be raised and protected by their parents and within their families. This is unfortunately not always possible. Children continue to be unsafe with people in places that are supposed to be safe.

Due to the continued lack of safety for children both within the presence or absence of the parents, the researcher recommends the following:

- **Sexual education** should be provided extensively at a pre-school level, since very young children are targeted for sexual abuse.
- Teenagers should be educated about **planning for parenthood** in their early teens, as they mostly engage in sex without considering the long-term implications of teenage parenthood.
- **Parenthood education** should be continually offered to support parents in their important tasks.
- **Therapy** should be offered to abused children in order to contribute to their healing process and the prevention of the abuse of their own children in the future.
- Social workers need intensive training regarding **the relationship between the process of parenting and the dynamics of child sexual abuse.** This can equip them to deal with the issues that confront sexually abused children and their parents.

- Social workers need to be **trained to provide therapeutic services** to sexually abused children and their parents. This will enable parents to be more knowledgeable about how to nurture and deal with their abused children as they go through the healing process.

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