

PARENTING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD AND IMPLICATIONS ON CHILD DEVELOPMENT: INTERROGATING PARENTING STRATEGIES IN WEDZA DISTRICT, ZIMBABWE

Rose Mugweni

Department of Educational Foundations,
Great Zimbabwe University, P. O. Box 1235 Masvingo,
ZIMBABWE.

rmugweni@gzu.ac.zw

ABSTRACT

Early childhood parenting strategies are viewed as having influence on child development. In extending the frontiers of knowledge on parenting, the current study investigated parental strategies and their implication on child development in Wedza district, Zimbabwe. The Parent Effects Model, Child Effects Model, Transactional Model and Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory informed the study. A qualitative phenomenological case design was used to collect data from a sample of thirty (30) purposefully selected mother participants with children under five years. The data collection procedure involved four focus group discussions of eight (8) mothers each and six (6) individual face-to-face in-depth interviews were. Tesch's Thematic Data Analysis Model was used to process data. Results revealed that parents in Wedza district are in families that practice permissive and authoritative parenting styles. Five common parenting strategies namely: good role model, fostering self-esteem, command strategy, inductive/consistent discipline and relationship maintenance. Children in the families in Wedza district experienced the different parenting strategies or techniques that influenced their developmental trajectory. The parenting strategies influenced holistic development of young children and this had implications to care giving. A developmentally appropriate practice model was recommended for use in early childhood parenting in order to foster sustainable parenting.

Keywords: Parenting strategies, young children, appropriate practice, model, self-esteem

INTRODUCTION

Parenting is understood as the intricacies of raising a child in an ecology of child development. Parents have a critical role to play during this phase of child development. They use different parenting styles and strategies to nurture, socialise and scaffold their young children. Parenting styles are viewed as the different ways used to raise a child. Common in literature are the four Baumrind's (1971) parenting styles namely: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and uninvolved or neglectful parenting (Levine & Munsch, 2014). Young children are the future of nations. They are every family's pride, joy and a country's greatest resource for sustainability. Having children and investing in them culturally, educationally and economically during the critical years of early childhood is the most developmentally appropriate practice parents can embrace. Experiences of young children in the first five years of life has a critical bearing on their later development, with the first three years being critically important (Levin & Munsch, 2014; Alderman & Engel, 2008). Literature shows that during this period, the developing brain is particularly sensitive to the effects of nutrition, socialisation and positive early stimulation and cognition (Smith, Baker-

Henningham, Brentani, Mugweni, & Walker, 2018). Children under five years require an enabling and supportive environment, rich with healthy nutrition, and warm, sensitive human interactions from care givers. They also need opportunities for early stimulation and cognition if they are to thrive and benefit from the parenting experiences.

Parenting and young children's development

Most researches done on different parenting styles and strategies and how they influence young children's development were done in on White, middle-class children (Levine & Munsch, 2014). The characteristics of different cultures may influence parenting styles and their outcomes regarding child development. A child's context of development and her livelihood in early years, diet, interaction patterns with care givers constitute her early life. Many variables affect child care and subsequently affect their development. An emotionally happy parent or care giver positively influence her child's development. In instances where parenting or caregiving is overly protective the child may be spoiled. Experience shows that in Zimbabwe, a first-born baby boy born after a long time without a child in a marriage tend to be over pampered.

Within the traditional cultures, child care practices are based on a culturally bound understanding of what children need and what they are expected to become. Bornstein (2002) proclaim that child rearing practices are embedded in a culture and determine to a larger extent, the behaviours and expectations surrounding the child's birth, infancy, childhood, adolescence and the way the child will parent as adults. Within the African and Western cultures, child rearing practices include activities concerned with providing emotional security and reducing child's stress. Thus, providing shelter, clothing, feeding, bathing and supervision of the child's toileting are some of the child rearing practices. The practices also include preventing and attending to a child's illness, nurturing and showing affection, interacting and stimulating play, socialising as well providing the child with a relatively safe environment for exploration (Cherry, 2018). The views imply that child care influence their young children's personality, character and competence (Nsameng, 2008).

Children's cultural contexts provide the major source of their development and the key players are those who care for children (Cherry, 2018). Lack of these supports has perennial effects on later development that is the physical wellbeing as well as social and cognitive development. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the parents to see to it that children are raised appropriately (Chinyoka & Ganga, 2013). literature on child development generally subscribe to the assumption that parents, as primary caregivers, exert the original and perhaps the most significant influence on the development of the child's present and future emotional health. A child's development is therefore strongly influenced by the immediate family, particularly by their home, social and cultural environments (Levine & Munsch, 2014).

Parenting styles in early childhood

Consistent with Baumrind's (1971) views, **authoritative** parents show high levels of control with a good deal of warmth and encouragement. Authoritative parents encourage children's independent activity, responsibility and problem-solving skills. Authoritative parents are democratic and these establish responsible expectations and rules that children are expected to follow. Such parents encourage children's independent activity, responsibility and problem-solving skills. Although they make demands on their children, their expectations are reasonable and age appropriate. The demands, rules and expectations made on their child are justified. The parents with this style are open to listen to their child's point of view (Heath, 2005). The authoritative parenting helps a child to learn the wisdom behind rules and share them in a loving manner. The goal, values and life styles of parents have a great effect on the

growing child. Levine and Munsch (2018), aver that in essence authoritative parents treat their children with respect and respond their child's unique characteristics.

Authoritarian parents

Authoritarian parents are characterised by strictness, high degree of parental control, narrow limits on the child's behaviour and discipline (Levine & Munsch, 2014). Such parents set rules that children are expected to follow and they do not explain the reasoning behind their expectations and punishment may be used to redirect rebellious actions. The focus is primarily on behaviour and this can create children who are not independent thinkers but are compliant to their parents' values. Such a child rearing practice has adverse effects on children's holistic development. Children from such families may at times develop a low-self-esteem, lack initiative abilities, lack good social skills among many (Levine & Munsch, 2014). Authoritarian parents are strict on control and impose a large number of rules that they want their children to obey. They are not compelled to justify their rules. Children may be required to spend time mastering instruments, sports or homework assignments. The parents are not sensitive to the feelings of their children and are considered low on the dimension of acceptance and responsiveness. Precisely, the parenting style combines high levels of control and low levels of warmth, marked by expectation of total compliance from the child. Haiman, (2013) avers that children of strict parents may suffer from low self-esteem, lack of confidence, anxiety problems and inferiority complex. They may grow up feeling as though their parents do not listen to them or acknowledge them. This may cause children to believe that their feelings or thoughts are not respected, valid or important. These children may not feel accepted or worthy of affection and love because their parents only give them attention when they that feel the children have done well.

Permissive parenting

Permissive parenting child care style provides lots of warmth and acceptance to their children and few rules and restrictions. Such parents believe that their children cannot handle discipline due to a low sense of self-esteem or maturity and end up becoming lenient on values (Sonia & Amar, 2012). Children of such parents are free to express their ideas and opinion. They have an equal say with parents in decision making in their family (Sonia & Amar, 2012). The parents do little monitoring, and less restrictions of a child's activities. The parenting style provides warmth and acceptance but seem not to proffer rules and restrictions. As the earliest and most durable source of socialisation, a child's parents are the first people & whom he identifies, and they remain the strongest influence in his development (Sonia and Amar, 2012). Thus, improving the quality of parent-child relationship can be expected to have positive effects on the individual child, family and the society as a whole. Parents should realise that they are the people who can incorporate all the necessary abilities and incompetence of life into their child. Hence the way in which parents bring up their children surely influences their overall development.

Uninvolved or neglectful parenting style

Uninvolved or neglectful parenting style that is low both on the dimension of warmth and on the dimension of control. The parents seem not interested in parenting or may actively reject their children (Levine & Munsch, 2014). They seem detached from their child's life. Several unintentional factors can contribute to this approach such as divorce or high-demanding job that creates unplanned separation between the adult and the child (Berg, 2011) Most teenage mothers display uninvolved child care due to lack of maturity and inexperience in parenting.

In their study O'Connor & Scott (2007), found that child care practices determined that other parents who showed neglectful parenting had children without the maturity or responsibility

to care for them and typically remain more interested in their own desires than their child's needs. In extreme situations, uninvolved parents may mentally devalue the worth of their child to the level that they become emotionally or physically abusive. Bronfenbrenner (1986) contends that the family should provide nurturance affection and opportunities of growth which have direct impact on the child's development. If the system does not adequately provide the needs of the child, the child is therefore likely to have developmental problems.

In Zimbabwe parents have child care beliefs and strategies that are derived from traditional culture and based on consensus within the culture about what is natural, normal and necessary in raising young children. The context of child-care in many societies including in Wedza, Zimbabwe is composed of many variables. A great deal of literature published before the 1990's examined the effects of parenting styles on children's outcomes, particularly establishing the benefits to children of authoritative parenting as opposed to the negative outcomes produced by authoritarian and permissive parenting (Levine & Munsch, 2014). The context of child-care has been until recently rather stable and with adequate resources to support the traditional way of life. However, the invasion of modern style concepts and changes in the economic conditions, social organisation and family structure such as the rise of female-headed households are reshaping and, in some instances, even replacing the traditional practices of parenting. Many traditional child care practices which have evolved over centuries have proven to be beneficial for children's optimal development. The replacement of these practices by 'modern' but not culturally relevant practices has had a negative impact on the healthy development of children.

The purpose of this study

Limited number of studies have focused on parenting strategies and child development among the people of Wedza district, Zimbabwe. The purpose of this study was to investigate and identify parental strategies professed by mothers in Wedza and implications on child development. The study was guided by the following research question:

1. What parenting strategies do mothers in Wedza district identify as appropriate for child care and development?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was informed by the **Parent Effect Model**, **Child Effects Model**, **Transactional Model**, and Urie Bronfenbrenner's Systems Ecological Theory (Levine & Munsch, 2014). The four theories/models triangulated to situate my study. The theories created a world view through which the phenomenon under study is grounded. Figure 1 below shows the interrelatedness of the first the three models.

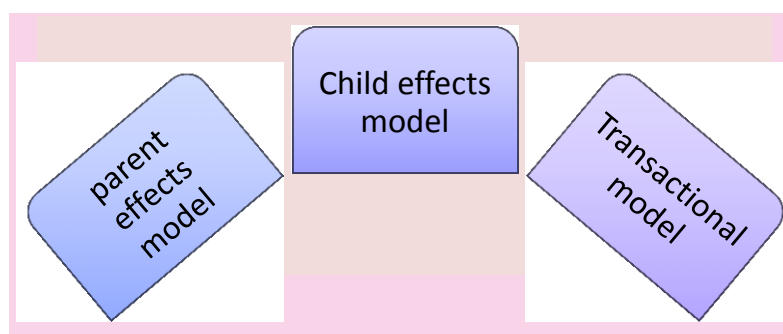


Figure 1: Parenting Models (Source: Author)

Parent Effect Model

Parent Effect Model assumes that parents cause the characteristics that we see in their children, whether children are viewed as fragile or resilient, as in need of a firm hand or of tolerance. All the theory assumes is that different approaches to parenting and parents' behaviours make their children the type of people they become. However, it should be noted that in parenting it's a dyadic process.

Parent Effect Model

This model contends that in some instances it is the characteristics of the child that seems to drive the process and determine the parenting process, strategies and styles (Levine & Munsch, 2014). Whether the child is male or female, or of what age, both of these child characteristics influence how parents treat their children. As children grow to become toddlers, and begin to do things on their own way, their autonomy affects their parents. The parents may react by exerting greater control over their child's behaviour. The child's gender is also a characteristic that elicits different types of parenting behaviour. Paikoff & Brooks-Gun (1995) suggest that parents often exercise more control over their daughters and show warmth and affection to them, while granting greater autonomy to their sons.

The Transactional Model

This model assumes that influence moves not only from parent to child but also from child to parent. That is the influences moves in both directions as part of an ongoing process (Levine & Munsch, 2014). Parents do influence their children's behaviour, but children also influence their parent's behaviour. Parents respond to characteristic of their children such as temper tantrums and exert effort to shape their behaviour, but children are not passive recipients of the efforts. The children's responses act as feedback and these influence the parents' future child care behaviours.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

Urie Bronfenbrenner (1917-2005) developed the Ecological Systems Theory to explain how everything in a child and the child's environment affects how a child grows and develops (Levine & Munsch, 2014). Figure 2 below shows a visual of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory as contexts of child development including the Wedza children.

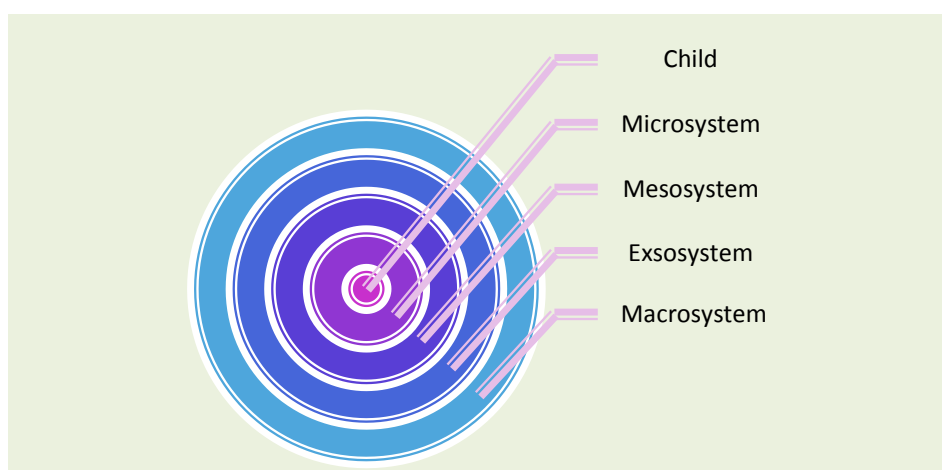


Figure 1: Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

The **microsystem** is the small, immediate environment the child lives in. It includes the face-to-face interaction that a child has in his or her immediate settings such as home, school, and

church. Interaction between mother and child or child, siblings and peers form a microsystem (Levin & Munsch, 2014). Nature of interaction of these people and groups with the child has effect on the his or her development. Encouraging and nurturing relationships enable the child to develop positively. How a child acts or reacts to people in the microsystem affect how they treat her in return. Each child's genetic and biologically personality traits or temperament, end up affecting how others treat them (Levin & Munsch, 2014).

Bronfenbrenner's **Mesosystem** describes how the different parts of a child's microsystem work together for the sake of the child. Two settings that contain the child are brought together. Such as parents' meeting with the child's teacher, the home setting interacts with the school setting and the interaction influence his or her progress at school. In contrast, if the child's two sets of care-givers mom with step-father and dad with step-mother, disagree how to best raise the child and give the child conflicting lessons when they see him, this will hinder the child's growth in different channels (Levin & Munsch, 2014).

The **exosystem** level includes the other people and places that the child herself may not interact with often but that still have a large effect on him. For example, parents' workplaces, extended family members, and the neighbourhood. If a child's parent gets laid off from work, there may be a negative effect on the child due to parents' inability to buy food items, clothes, pay rent or school fees (Santrock, 2019). The opposite is true if a child's parent gets promoted at work, and the parent will better provide physiological needs.

The **macrosystem** is the fourth level of the theory. It consists of cultural norms that guide the nature of the organisations and places that make up one's everyday life (Levin & Munsch, 2014). The macrosystem is the largest and most remote set of people and things to a child. Although this level is remote it has influence over the developing child. It includes things such as the relative freedoms permitted by the national government, cultural values, the economy and wars (Santrock, 2019). The different things may affect a child either positively or negatively. Lastly, is the **chronosystem** which consist of the changes (and continuities) over time in the ecology of child development?

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative phenomenological case study design was used in the study (Maree, 2016). In the approach participants the custodians of information regarding the phenomenon under study – parenting strategies mothers in Wedza district identified as developmentally appropriate for child care. The researcher was therefore interested with the lived experiences of mothers as they identify child care strategies. Phenomenology require that information should be obtained from people with lived experiences of the issue under investigation (De Vos et al, 2011; Mugweni, 2017). Qualitative phenomenological research is holistic (Manen, 2017), in the sense that it attempts to provide a contextual understanding of the complex interrelationships of causes and consequences of some cultural acuties of Wedza district mothers as they nurture their children during early childhood.

An interpretative phenomenological analysis (De Vos et al, 11) was employed to handle the data, and make meaning of their life experiences in raising their children. The study was carried out in Wedza district, Mashonaland Province, Zimbabwe. The research targeted mothers with children under five years of age. The task was to construct an understanding of parental strategies mothers in Wedza identify as appropriate for child care. child development.

Instrumentation and Sampling

Data were collected through four focus group discussions of eight members each and six individual face-to-face mother participants conveniently selected (Creswell, 2014) mothers

under fifty years in Wedza district, Mashonaland East Province, Zimbabwe. Focus group discussions were a quick and convenient way to collect data from the mothers (Nyumba et al, 2018). To augment data from the focus group discussions, six (6) individual face-to-face in-depth interviews were conducted. The six mothers were identified during focus group discussions for their wide experience on cultural issues and child care. (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). The focus group discussions and semi-structured face-to-face individual interviews were used to triangulation data collection methods and a credible way of soliciting from mothers in Wedza.

Ethical Considerations

Consent to participate in the study was sought from participants. They completed consent forms to show their willingness to participate in the research. The purpose of the study was explained to the participant and they were assured of absence from harm. They were informed that their involvement in the study was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw at any stage of the research if they were not comfortable. Participants were also assured of anonymity in the research report. To uphold the ethical principle of confidentiality their responses were coded (*WM* represented ‘Wedza mother’ and *IWM* was for ‘individual interviewed Wedza mother’)

Data Collection Procedures

To allow for the collection of as much relevant information as possible, the focus group and individual interviews were not tightly structured. Therefore, relevant issues which were not included in the interview guide but arose during the process of conducting the interviews were explored and noted in impromptu supplementary questions. This was in line with the flexible nature of qualitative research (Yin, 2014).

Data Analysis

Data from the four-focus group discussion of eight mothers each and the six individual interviews were explored. Themes and descriptive statistics were used to present the results. Data were analysed using Tesch’s qualitative thematic data analysis approach to determine views of the mothers (De Vos et al, 2011). Themes and Vignettes were employed to present, interpret and discuss results (Cohen & Manion, 2010). The analysis of data warranted qualitative processes.

Findings and Discussion

The data collected through focus group discussions and individual interviews generated results presented diagrammatically in Figure 2 below.

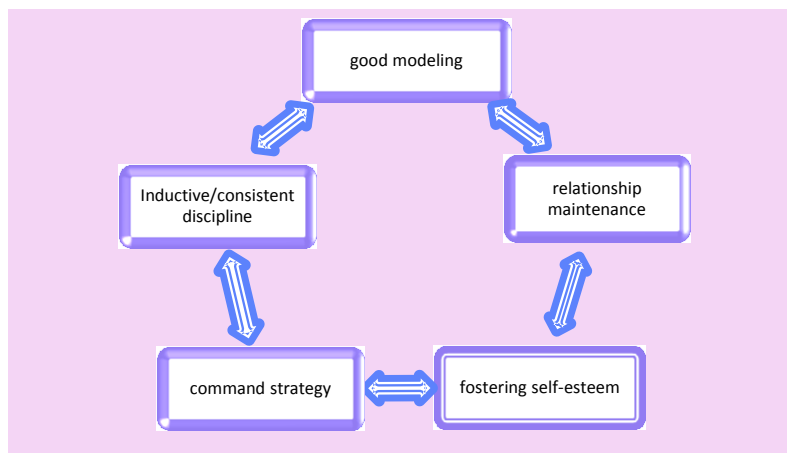


Figure 2: Results of the Study [Source: Author]

As indicated in figure 2 above, the main parenting strategies and techniques identified by mothers in Wedza district as appropriate for child care were: good modelling, consistent discipline, command strategy, fostering self-esteem, and relationship. A discussion of results as found during focus group and individual face-to-face interviews is explored below.

Good Modelling

Quite a substantial number of the mother participants – twenty-six out of thirty, identified care giver good modelling as an appropriate parenting strategy. The mothers were of the view that in both extended and nuclear families they care and socialise their children for positive development thorough modelling. Others espoused that good modelling set positive prosocial behaviour for their children. Consistent with their submission the following is what some of the participants said:

These days young children are growing up in both extended and nuclear families and also attend early childhood centres. They see many behaviours and have to be guided regarding good interactions and behaviour (IWM 03).

If not shown the right parts regarding behaviour young children may imitate anything be it behaviour or language good or bad. The it will not be of use to complain about the child's antisocial behaviour latter (WM15).

Rovedzera mwana achiri mudiki nzira yakanaka yekufamba nayo, hazvina kuti mukomana kana musikana ndiko kuti agoita hunhu kwawho azoyemurika mudunhu', meaning that *a child needs to be taught the right part while he is still young regardless of gender so that he will develop good personality and be respected in society (IWM6).*

What the mothers were proffering is consistent with what Levine and Munsch (2014) aver that parents are the first teachers and the first models of what social relationships and prosocial behaviour re like. In a process of positive modelling, parents, sibilings, peers and other significant others in the child's context of development, engage the growing child on how to behave and interact in appropriate ways in accordance with the norms and values their society (Damon, 2006).

Still indication their strategies for appropriate child care for positive development another participant said:

By showing my child the right path, I need him to be knowledgeable about good and bad behaviour. I teach him to be like that. She will be able to look after her sibilings and interact well them. She will obey rules and laws of our community, treat other people with respect (WM15).

The views articulated by the participants are in line with earlier results that teaching a child to be good behaviour helps the child to be autonomous take care of oneself and others, and when grown-up be a good citizen. Generally, responsible people are found to be responsible citizens who treat others fairly, are trustworthy, honour their commitments, and are environmentally aware (Cherry, 2018; Street, 2015; Character Education, 2011).

Inductive/Consistent Discipline

Parents of young children understand that appropriate parenting strategies are the ways of bringing up young children. This involves a process of promoting a child's physical, social-emotional and cognitive development. All mothers in the study identified consistent discipline as an appropriate parenting strategy for children to develop. By being consistent in their discipline parents aim to teach their children prosocial behavior and character as they

develop. that they grow up to be good citizens. Mothers went further to explain what they consider to be consistent discipline in child care.

Consistent discipline shapes the child's behaviour and makes the child to be focussed on what is expected of him by parents. Because it is the role of the mother or parent to shape the child. Being consistent in one's discipline direct and induct a young child the way you want (WM27).

A young child should be scuffled through discipline. In disciplining a child, he is given the right way of living. Parents need to give a child age-appropriate rules be followed in his interactions with siblings or other members of the family like uncles and aunts. (WM17).

One of the participants (IWM04) who is a widow revealed in her responses that she uses beating as a way of maintaining instilling discipline in her children. Her children should be aware that she struggles to make ends meet. Hence, disciplining the young children makes them knowledgeable of life challenges and train them to save the hard-earned resources. O'Connor and Scott (2007) say that there are actions taken by caregivers that are supportive of children's growth and development and there are also some that are detrimental.

Consistent or inductive discipline as espoused by Levine & Munsch (2014), involve parents setting clear limits for children and give consequences for negative behaviour. The child is explained to about why the behaviour was wrong and what he might do to correct the situation. Induction can further be divided into **self-oriented** and **other-oriented** (Hoeve et al (2009). In self-oriented induction the child is asked about the consequences that the child might experience as a result of his behaviour. On the other hand, in the other-oriented induction, the child thinks about consequences of his behaviour to someone else. For example, making another child cry and being asked to help the child feel better.

Command Strategy

In using the command strategy, the parent informs the child what should be done in the interactions. Most of the participants twenty-five identified themselves with the command parenting technique. Mothers alluded that they do not treat the young children with punishment, but the child simply respect the mother authority. This is what some participants had to say:

Most of the time I do not force my child to do things or to comply. I am firm and fir with him. I just say 'Rudo it is time to go to pack your toys, clean-up and get ready for time to sleep' (IWM 5).

And another participant echoed the same sentiments that a parent should be firm and fair with the child, where they explain expectations and boundaries.

I make sure my child knows about the expected behaviour, the proffered language, routines and activities to be done, how to play with others appropriately and others. So, when I touch on any of these, then the child response positively. Its inducting or scaffolding the child (WM11).

As indicated by the results above. The command strategy facilitates good parenting. The strategy helps foster empathy, honest, self-resilience, self-control, cooperation and joy (Steinberg, (2001). Steinburg further alludes that the strategy promotes motivation, creativity, and the desire to achieve. Children are protected from developing anxiety, depression, stress and anti-social behaviour. A mother who embraces the command parenting strategy instil moral values in their young child through stories despite the child's character (Ginsburg, 2004). Children with good social skills and development progressing well, have either both

parents or single or stay with responsible grandparents or relatives who are authoritative in nature. Research has also evinced that children's development of cognitive and social skills needed for later success in school may be best supported by a parenting style known as responsive parenting. Accordingly, if parents or guardians are not aware of the impact of their responsiveness, their children's development affected. Some parents hence end up spoiling their children in the name of showing them love. This is a common scenario in our African society that when a couple has taken long without a child, they tend to spoil the child when they finally bear one (Chinyoka & Ganga, 2013).

Fostering Self-Esteem

The participants in Wedza district also revealed that fostering positive self-esteem is an important parenting strategy all the mothers of young children should have. During interviews the participant mothers all pointed out that their children should have self-esteem. The reasons they gave were that with self-esteem the child grows to be confidence in whatever he does in life. They also reported that self-esteem and self-efficacy make people respected and listened to in society.

During focus group discussions a view by a mother which was held by the majority was that development of self-esteem from early childhood is a behaviour requisite nowadays. A participant (WM14) espoused that children with positive self-esteem grow to be leaders in society because they are not shy to give their views on important matters. Mothers should set the cultural learning environment that support their children's development of self-esteem, confidence and self-efficacy. The participant emphasized the by saying: Notes:

It is common knowledge that children need to learn many things in life. Their knowledge base and self-confidence should start at home where they are taught by their parents. This knowledge must first come from the parents especially mothers because they take care of the children from birth. Mothers in their homes should make sure their children develop positive self-esteem and confidence. This will help them grow up respected and become successful adults (WM30).

Results of this study confirms Idang's (2015) findings that the well-being and holistic development of society in terms of culture and values are established and sustained socialisation of the young. Consistent with the findings of the Study, Street (2015) also earlier found that having positive self-esteem has a strong correlation to behaviour and happiness, hence teaching a child to be assertive is important. In addition, literature shows that there is a strong relationship between how a child feels about himself and how he acts (Perman, 2011; Cherry, 2018). Hence it was found vital by mothers in Wedza district to teach their children to have positive self-esteem. Results imply that parents who embrace command strategy practice authoritative parenting style. Ginsberg (2004) concurs that authoritative parents are communicative and supportive to their children's activities and are responsive to their children's needs.

Relationship Maintenance

When participants were asked what other parenting strategies or techniques, they use during child care the majority of them twenty-seven reported that they try as much as possible to maintain positive relationship with their young children. Participants aver that they try to create a positive relationship with their child. A warm relationship enables a parent to have more influence on the child's behaviour (Ginsburg, 2004). The parent becomes a more attractive model for the child to imitate. Explaining relationship maintenance three participants stated:

I keep my child in my circle by showing him affection. Making my child feel appreciated and loved is really imperative to me and the child. It enables him to develop a strong bond with me. Bonding with my child help maintain our relationship (WM29).

My presence is with my child, telling him stories, singing with him and do rhymes. My child learns how to communicate, play, share with others form me. I provide basic physiological needs and protection. If he is not happy, I cuddle him and try to answer all his questions. I am always there for my child (IWM04).

I am the secure base of my child. When she is sick, I take my child to a doctor and nurture him, make him feel loved. I attend to my child with warmth. When the child is not sure, or confident of himself, I show love. When he performs a task well, even if he tries, I appreciate the child (WM16)

Further, most of the participants twenty-eight (28) submitted that they portray actions, behaviours and models to make their children feel loved and cared for. Submissions during focus group interviews showed that this was done within a cultural perspective. One of the participants stated:

I always play together with the child and read her books to keep our relationship going. I tell her how beautiful and important she is. I tell the child folk tells with moral values. We take walks together. Sometimes we do little house chores together, like feeding the rabbits and watering ducks. I model giving parental affection to my child (WM10).

The results show that mothers in Wedza district use different techniques and behaviours in order to maintain a warm relationship with their child and sustain it. When a parent display affection towards a child, praises the child for things she has done well in the past, or show that they understand how the child feels, it helps motivate the child to comply with what the parent wants the child to do (Smith, 1988; WHO, 2004; Levine & Munsch, 2014). Consistently with the discourse, O'Connor and Scott (2007) argue that, there are actions taken by caregivers that are supportive of children's growth and development and there are also some that are detrimental, so parents should use parenting strategies that foster positive child development.

CONCLUSION

This study provided documented results on parenting strategies used by mothers with children under five years in Wedza district, Zimbabwe. Results showed children were in families where authoritative and permissive parenting styles were used. It was found that parental strategies mostly used by mothers in Wedza district were: good modelling, inductive/consistent discipline, command strategy, fostering self-esteem, and relationship maintenance. Information collected confirms that mothers in Wedza cared for their young children within a cultural perspective. They also used child care techniques such as being responsive; loving and bonding; carrying the child on the back; providing the child's physiological (food, shelter, play material) and psychological needs (secure base); engaging in minor house chores; taking walks; telling the children folk tells; modelling pro-social behaviour; and being firm and fair with the child. The mothers mostly used positive and appropriate techniques to respond to young children's behaviours. It was also found that in isolated instances negative techniques such as beating a child, where 'spare the rod and spoil the child' was used. The caregiver mediated much for the child's experiences. Findings of this study can guide future efforts in advancing knowledge of parenting and parenting strategies in different cultural contexts.

RECOMMENDATIONS DERIVED FROM THIS STUDY

Basing on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

The parent's understanding of the effects of parenting strategies on children's development is vital because it influences the way they bring their children. Mothers in other contexts including those in Wedza should be educated of the enhanced need to socialise their children aged one to five years using appropriate parenting strategies to ensure sustainable and holistic child development. The mothers should be engaged in parental education via different avenues including the media, since the way children are reared has an influence in their holistic development. More research on parenting in early childhood with different cultural groups in other contexts of child development need to be undertaken.

Data Availability

Raw data obtained from the administered instruments will be used for further research by the author herself. The analysed data can be shared after publication of this manuscript and are available from the corresponding author upon request.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that she has no conflict of interest.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Alderman, H. and Engle, P.L (2008). *Strategies for reducing inequalities and improving developmental outcomes for young children in low-income and middle-income countries*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- [2]. Baumrind, D. (1971). Current patterns of parental authority. *Developmental Psychology Monograph*. 4(1), Part 2, 1-103.
- [3]. Berg B. (2011). *A research Paper on the Effects of Parenting Styles on a Preschool Aged Child's Emotional Development*. University of Wisconsin: Stout Menomonie,
- [4]. Bornstein, M. H. (2002). Parenting infants. In M. H. Bornstein (Ed.), *Handbook of parenting: Vol. 1. Children and Parenting* (2nd ed., pp. 3-43). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- [5]. Bronfenbrenner, U. (1986). Ecology of the family as a context for human development: research perspective. *Developmental Psychology*, 22(6), 723-742.
- [6]. Character Education (2011). *Collier District Schools*, November 2011. <https://mobile.collierschools.com/character/docs/News-Nov11.pdf>
- [7]. Cherry, K. (2018). Authoritative parenting: Characteristics and Effects. 5 October 2018. <http://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-authoritative-parenting-2794956>
- [8]. Chinyoka, K. & Ganga, E. (2013). *Greener Journal of Social Sciences*. Vol. 3 (7), 364-370.
- [9]. Copper, M. L. (2013). Attachment styles, emotion regulation and adjustment in toddlers. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 74, 1380-1379.
- [10]. Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design. Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*. 4th Edition. Lincoln: Sage Publications.
- [11]. Damon, W. (2006). Socialisation and individuation. In G. Handel (Ed.), *Childhood Socialisation*, pp 3-9. New Brunswick, NJ: Aldine Transaction.
- [12]. De Vos, A.S, Strydom, H, Fouche, C.B. and Delpont, C.S.L. (2011). *Research at Grass Roots: For the Social Sciences and Human Service Professions*. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.
- [13]. Ginsburg, E. (2004). Mother-Child Conversation in Different Social Classes and Communicative Settings. *Child Development*, 62(6), 782-796

- [14]. Haimen, C. (2013) 'Risk and protective factors for children of depressed parents', in S.S. Luther (Ed.) *Resilience and Vulnerability: Adaptation in the Context of Childhood Adversities*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [15]. Hoeve, M., Dubas, J.S., Eichelsheim, V. L., van der Laan, P. H., Smeenk, W., & Gerris, J. R. M. (2009). The relationship between parenting and delinquency: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 37(6), 749-775.
- [16]. Levin, E & Munsch, J. (2014). *Child development: An Active learning approach*. Sage, Los Angeles.
- [17]. Mugweni, R. (2017). Issues of access, equity and quality in early childhood development programmes in Zimbabwe. *Sociology Study Journal*, June 2017, Vol. 7, No. 6, 315-324.
- [18]. McMahon R.J. "Parent training interventions for preschool-age children." Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development [online]. Tremblay R.E., R.G. McMillan, J.H. and Schumacher, S. (1993). Research in Education. A Conceptual Introduction. New York: Harper Collins.
- [19]. National Association for the Education of Young Children. (1995). NAEYC position statement: Responding to linguistic and cultural diversity. Retrieved September 15, 2003, from the NAEYC Web site: www.naeyc.org
- [20]. Nsameng, A.B. (2008) *Constructing Cultural Identity in Families*, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, UK: The Open University.
- [21]. O'Connor T.G. & Scott S. B. C (2007). *Parenting and Outcomes for Children*. London, Joseph Rowtree Foundation.
- [22]. Santrock, J. W (2019). *Lifespan Development*, (17th Ed,) New York: McGraw-Hill.
- [23]. Smith, J. A., Baker-Henningham, H., Brentani, A., Mugweni, R. & Walker, S. P. (2018). Implementation of Reach Up early childhood program: acceptability, appropriateness, and feasibility in Brazil and Zimbabwe. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences Journal, Special Issue, Implementation Research and Practice for Early Childhood Development*. 120-140. Ann. N.Y. Acad. Sci. ISSN 0077-8923.
- [24]. Smith, T. E. (1988). Parental control techniques: Relative frequencies and relationships with situational factors. *Journal of Family Issues*, 9(2), 155-175.
- [25]. Sonia, G. & Amar, R. (2012). *Research on Factors of Child Rearing Practices: A Qualitative Analysis*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- [26]. WHO (2004), A Review: The Importance of Caregiver-Child Interactions for the Survival and Healthy Development of Young Children. WHO.