

**THE ROLE OF PRACTITIONERS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT
CENTRES IN SHAPING BEHAVIOUR OF CHILDREN**

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Full thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts (Child and Family Studies) from the

Department of Social Work

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WESTERN CAPE

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Date: May 2018

ABSTRACT

Early childhood centres play a profound role in shaping the behaviour of children. Research indicates that early childhood centres contribute to the holistic development of children, encompassing their motor, cognitive and behavioural skills. Research has further shown that the South African authorities have an early childhood policy which spans various aspects of childhood development. To establish the nexus between early childhood centres and the behaviour of children, this study explored the role of practitioners in early childhood development centres in shaping the behaviour of children. The study uses the Ecological Systems Theory to interrogate its tenets of the theory and the research findings. The study engaged a qualitative approach to explore this phenomenon. Semi-structured interviews, field notes and observations were used to obtain data from parents, principals and practitioners at early childhood centres. Data was analysed thematically and as such, three main themes emerged from the research: the behaviour of children in early childhood development centres; practitioners' perceptions of their own roles in early childhood development centres; and the attitudes of practitioners towards their roles in early development centres.

The results of the study indicated that early childhood centres play a great role in shaping the behaviour of children. Practitioners mould the behaviour of children through nurturing relationships with them, and engaging with parents where children's behaviour deviates from the norm. It was established that the behaviour that children displayed in early childhood centres was illustrative of what occurred at their homes. At a result, it was established that the attitudes of parents and practitioners were pertinent to the engagement between the three key players.

KEYWORDS

Children

Behaviour

Parent

Early childhood development

Early childhood development practitioner

Early childhood development centre

Role

Ecological systems theory



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADHD:	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
ECD:	Early Childhood Development
ECDC:	Early Childhood Development Centre
NIECDP:	National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy
NRC:	National Research Council
UNESCO:	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF:	United Nations Children's Fund



DECLARATION STATEMENT

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I declare that the study entitled *The role of practitioners in early childhood development centres in shaping the behaviour of children* is the product of my own research. All sources used in the study have been indicated and fully acknowledged by means of complete references.

Name: Sabrah Shertiel

Signed: Sabrah Shertiel ...

Date: 23 July 2018

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank and express my gratitude to Dr C. J. Erasmus for her supervision of this research work. Her support, advice, guidance and constructive criticism made the completion of this thesis possible.



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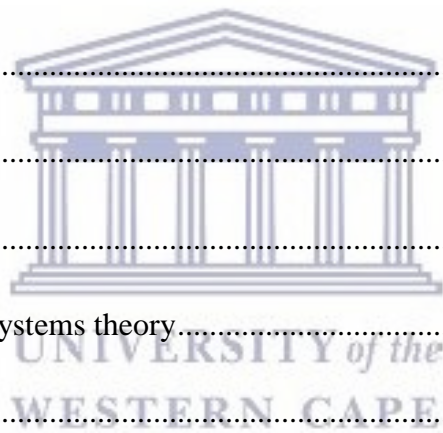
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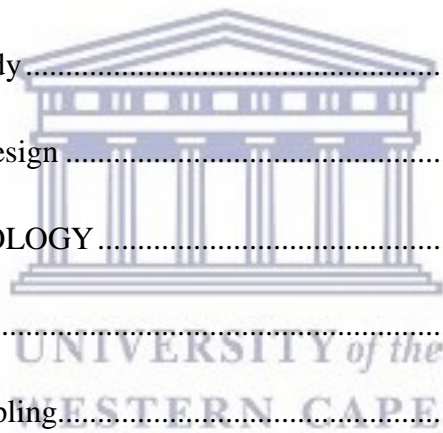
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INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Background and rationale

Early childhood is the most fundamental and primary period of development in human life. It is ‘the time when the brain develops most rapidly and it is a critical window of opportunity for establishing a child’s immunity and other health outcomes’ (Albino & Berry, 2013:79). The early years of children’s lives are when their concepts, skills and attitudes are achieved and are considered as the foundation for lifelong learning (Kweyiya, 2006). During this stage, children also learn different behaviours from their surrounding environments, which are based on the activities that complement their feelings and interests through speaking and communication with others (Hickman, 2014).

The achievement of these skills may be through a parent or a practitioner or practitioner. While a parent is best placed to offer these skills, the usual requirements such as fending for a family, place parents in a difficult position to do so (Selepe & Moll, 2016). As a result, the role of parents is deputised to practitioners or practitioners at early education centres (Terreni & McCallum, 2003). The role of practitioners is thus increased exponentially from simply watching children to ensuring that they learn desirable manners (Terreni & McCallum, 2003). As a result, practitioners are expected to take on the role of parents to ensure that they apply parenting styles that inculcate obedience and desired behaviours from children. While the point of departure may be what form of parenting children receive at home, the present study uses the early childhood centre as a setting that facilitates the adoption of good behaviours by children.

There is no defined age at which children can go to early childhood centres. In South Africa, early child education practices start from birth at home and then move to a more formal or informal

setting where practitioners or practitioners are charged with a mandate to look after the children (Bryson, Brewer, Sibieta & Butt, 2016 ; Budlender & Lund, 2011). Children as young as six months are taken to early childhood centres or caregivers, while their ‘parents are away at work, studying, engaged in business, or chronically ill or disabled’ (National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015:39). These circumstances account for informal or non-centre-based childhood development engagements (van Niekerk, Atmore & Ashley-Cooper, 2017). Some early childhood centres, which are non-profit-making, exist to offer a service to the community (van Niekerk & Ashley-Cooper, 2017). Others are profit-making, which creates a need for government to regulate them, and propose and subsidise programmes that conform with the National Framework on Early Childhood Development Centres (van Niekerk & Ashley-Cooper, 2017).

Currently, childcare outside the home has become a part of children’s lives. In this regard, McCartney (2004) points out that 50% of children attend a form of childcare centre (early child development centre, day-care and preschool), where 10 hours daily of their early life stages are spent with a child caregiver. As a result, there is a growing global emphasis, through policy and practice, on early childhood development. Article 6 (2) and Article 19 (2) in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the South African government’s development of the Early Childhood Development Act, illustrate such an emphasis. Furthermore, the Western Cape provincial government has embarked on the wide-scale construction of additional early childhood development centres (ECDC). These actions appear to both entrust and view ECD centres as behaviour-change agents for children and possibly also society at large (Smith, Cowie & Blades, 2015).

At the same time, there has been increasing concern about problems in child behaviour (Sawyer,

Afifi, Bearinger, Blakemore, Dick, Ezeh & Patton, 2012). The most important characteristics of any child's environment depend on the individuals with whom they establish close relationships (Woodhead, 2005). In ECD centres, classroom practitioners are usually responsible for planning the day for the children and engaging them in different activities. All of these arrangements and activities involve different behaviours from practitioners and children (Rimm-Kaufman, 2005). In a childcare centre with high standards, practitioners are responsive to the various needs of children. The relation between classroom setting and child behaviour, which depends mainly on practitioner-child interactions in the classroom (Rimm-Kaufman, 2005), should be taken into account.

Coupled with this behaviour are various attitudes and perceptions that inform the parents' decision to take their children to ECD centres. Where attitudes are negative, they may be reluctant to take a child to an ECD centre. The position is different where attitudes are positive, or where taking children to the ECD centre is a necessity. Peisner-Feinberg, 2007 indicates that positive attitudes of parents show the trust that parents place in ECD centres to aid the development of their children. Research indicates that these attitudes are not misplaced as far as the ECD centres' helping children to develop cognitive skills (Peisner-Feinberg, 2007). The attitudes of practitioners are also relevant, in light of their critical role in the holistic development of children at ECD centres. According to McCartney (2007), one way of assessing childcare quality is to observe behaviours that reflect positive interactions between children and educators on the one hand, and between children and their peers, on the other hand. This is in line with the assertion that a secure and effective practitioner-child dyad predicts positive interactions and social behaviours in children; while insecurity, less closeness and more conflicting practitioner-child relationships indicate poor social skills and more behaviour problems (Li, Liu, Lv, Xu, Wang & Huntsinger (2015). Li *et al.*

(2015) have stated that where the relationship between young children and their practitioners is close and affectionate, it yields positive behaviour. The present study's aim was therefore to explore the role of practitioners in early childhood centres in shaping the behaviour of children.

1.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory (1979), which focuses on the development of children within the context of the system of relationships that constitute their environment, forms the theoretical underpinning of the present study. The ecological systems theory takes into consideration the child's development in the context of the relationships that form within the child's environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Bronfenbrenner further posits that it is the face-to-face interaction between children and other people in their immediate environment that determine the children's development. This theory defines complicated layers of environment, namely the micro--, meso--, exo-, macro-- and chrono-systems, which affect individuals' growth and development (Donald & Dawes, 2000; Kaakinen, Geduly-Duff, Wilmshurst, 2013).

A **micro-system** is defined as

a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by a developing person in a given face-to-face setting with particular physical and material features, and containing other persons with distinctive characteristics of temperament, personality, and systems of belief (Bronfenbrenner 1994:1645).

Berk (2000) views the microsystem as the closest environment for a child and includes the structures with which the child can uphold direct interactions. These structures in the immediate environment of the child include family (parents), neighbourhood (the community) and the daycare

/ECDC centre (the practitioner), which have direct and indirect influences on the child's behaviour. Immediate interpersonal interactions include bi-directional relationships such as childparent at home, child-friend at an ECDC centre or community, child-practitioner, and so on (Berk, 2000; Donald & Dawes, 2000). A micro-system is regarded as a monitor for observing what values and beliefs are introduced to children because these will determine interpersonal relations in the meso-system.

The **meso--system** 'is a set of associated micro-systems' (Donald & Dawes, 2000:4) and works as the linkage between micro-system structures. However, besides meso--system relations, there are further factors called **exo-systems** that indirectly affect the child's development. Exo-systems are 'settings that do not only involve the child directly but also include the interactions of those who have a relationship with the child' (Donald & Dawes, 2000:5). For instance, a single parent's relationship with their employer or the social context may have negative effects on their ability to provide support for their child's development.

The **macro--system** 'refers to the political and cultural level of influence on the other levels of the system within which the child is a participant' (Donald & Dawes, 2000:5) such as families' unique use of methods of parenting on the basis of belief systems. It is evident that all layers of the bioecological systems theory play a part in shaping child development and behaviour and are thus relevant to the present study.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

There is growing evidence that spending long periods in childcare is a risk factor for increasing the problem behaviours of children, such as developing aggressive behaviour (McCartney, 2004).

Early childhood care can have a permanent impact on a child's development in his or her academic skills and socio-emotional development (Broekhuizen, 2015). Based on the studies conducted by researchers of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), it was found that children at the age of 4.5 years who spent much time in different settings of nonmaternal care, had an increased risk for acting out problem behaviours such as aggression and disobedience (McCartney, 2004). Studies on ECDC centres focus mainly on the quality of the physical care they give to children (McCartney, 2004), plans to involve children in different activities (Rimm-Kaufman, 2005), the relationship between children and their practitioners (Susan; Koziol; Clarke; Rispoli & Coutts, 2014) and developing programmes to prevent child problem behaviour in early childhood environments (Chi, Kim & Kim, 2016).

Furthermore, studies also focus on the quality, type and quantity of child care, their influence on children's behavioural outputs (Belsky & Pluess, 2011; Bradley & Vandell, 2007; Melhuish *et al.*, 2006; NICHD ECCRN, 2001, 2002, 2005) and the impact on children's development (Broekhuizen, 2015). These studies do not focus on the role of play at ECD centres in shaping children's behaviour, but rather on the characteristics of ECD centres, the relationship between children and ECDC centres, as well as the activities and programmes of ECD centres. The present study, therefore, aimed to role of practitioners in early childhood development (ECD) centres regarding the behaviour of children as this was a gap identified in the literature. The gap in the literature related to the lack of understanding on the attitudes and perceptions of practitioners in the Western Cape. This study as such interrogated this gap by engaging a sample that was instructive in informing this area. This may predict the level of psychological intervention and behaviour management that children at ECD centres may require in this area.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION

The study seeks to answer the following question: What role do practitioners in ECDCs play with regard to the behaviour of children?

1.5 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1.5.1 Aim of the study

The aim of the study was to explore the role of practitioners in early childhood development (ECD) centres regarding the behaviour of children.

1.5.2 Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study were to:

- explore the behaviour of children in ECD centres
- explore the attitudes of practitioners in ECD centres regarding the behaviour of children
- explore the perceptions of practitioners in ECD centres regarding the behaviour of children.

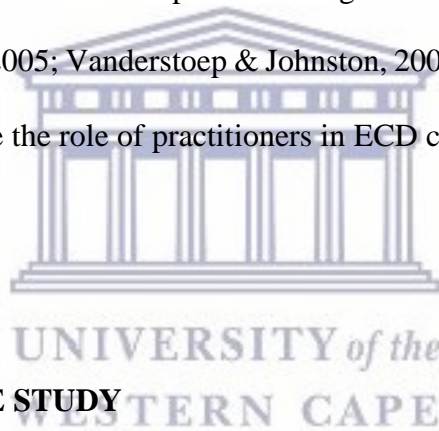


1.6 METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research methodology with an explorative descriptive design was employed to explore the attitudes to, and perceptions of, ECD centres regarding the behaviour of children. A qualitative methodological approach provides information about the human aspect of an issue – that is, the often contradictory behaviours, beliefs, opinions, emotions and relationships of individuals (Flick, 1998). For the purpose of this study, the population consisted of parents, practitioners and principals of the ECD centres (De Vos, 2011). The sample was a small group chosen from the larger population in order to give the study focus, and an easy achievement of the

data collection (Rubin & Babbie, 2011). The 27 participants who were selected on the basis of their understanding of the research (Creswell, 2007), included 3 practitioners, 3 principals and 3 parents from 3 ECD centres.

Furthermore, this study utilised an explorative and descriptive research design where research explores ‘an area that has not been studied and in which a researcher wants to develop initial ideas and a more focused research question’, or can be understood as the first stage in a sequence of studies focusing on the ‘what’ question (Neuman, 2000:510). Descriptive research was used ‘as it presents a picture of the specific details of a situation, social setting, or relationship’ (Neuman, 2000, pg 21). It seeks to explore and create a picture from given data which were observed during investigation (Burns & Grove, 2005; Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009). Through explorative design, the researcher sought to explore the role of practitioners in ECD centres in shaping the behaviour of children.



1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Because information regarding the role of ECD centres in shaping children’s behaviour is limited, the present research topic was designed to provide the stakeholders, ECDC sector, decision-makers, policy-makers and parents, with more understanding about the perceived impact of ECD centres’ roles on children’s behaviour. The findings in this study will contribute knowledge to parents, practitioners, schools, practitioners and broader society of the influence of ECD centres on the behaviour of children. It is also envisaged that the findings of this study will contribute to a better understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of the roles of ECD centres in shaping children’s behaviour.

1.8 DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

Child: ‘a person below the age of 18’ (UNICEF, 2005:1).

Behaviour: ‘the way individuals conduct themselves in society or towards other people’ (Hornby, 2000).

Parent: ‘includes a biological, foster or adoptive mother or father responsible for the care and protection of a young child, who is stable in the child's life and who loves the child and wants to protect the child’ (National Department of Social Development, 2015:19)

Practitioner/staff: ‘staff providing ECDC services through formal ECDC centre services, family services and playgroups and training, as well as those providing management support services to these workers’ (National Department of Social Development, 2015:16)

Early childhood development (ECD): ‘the composite cognitive, emotional, physical, mental, communication, social and spiritual development of children that takes place from conception until they enter formal schooling (i.e. Grade R) or reach the age of 8 years (in the case of children with developmental delays and/or disabilities for whom entry into formal schooling is delayed), whichever occurs first’ (National Department of Social Development, 2015:14)

Early childhood development centre: An ECD centre may offer day care as well as a preschool programme (National Department of Social Development, 2015:15).

Early childhood development services: ‘a range of services provided to facilitate the emotional, intellectual, mental, spiritual, moral, physical and social development and growth of children from birth to nine years’ (Department of Social Development, 2006). ‘Services or support provided to infants and young children or to the child's parent or caregiver by a government department or

civil society organisation with the intention to promote early childhood developments’ (National Department of Social Development, 2015:15).

Role: ‘a comprehensive aggregate of behaviours that is recognized by others and proves a means of placing or identifying a person in society’ (Kaslow& Massey, 2004:535)

Ecological system theory: A developmental theory that views human development from a person-in-environment context emphasizing that all growth and development occurs within the context of the bi-directional relationship in and between various levels of systems. A child, for instance, must be studied in the context of the family system and the family needs to be understood within the broader community and social culture and values (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

1.9 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

Chapter 1 is an introduction to the study. It provides an overview of the full thesis, describing the aim and objectives, stating the problem and providing the background and rationale to ECDCs’ role in shaping the behaviour of children. The chapter briefly introduces the theory which underpins the study, the literature context, the research methods applied, and ends with the significance of the study.

Chapter 2 discusses the theoretical framework underpinning the study. It aims to explain the bioecological theory, and to establish a link between it and the current study.

Chapter 3 is a detailed discussion of the study’s literature review, the relevancy of early childhood development, of increasing the number of such centres, of children’s behaviour concerns related to such an increase, as well as the role that these centres may play in shaping children’s behaviour.

Chapter 4 gives an overview of the research methodology which frames the design of the study alongside the data collection procedures, sampling, rigour and trustworthiness of the execution of

the research, feedback on the pilot study, procedures in the main study, and the data analyses that were used. The chapter also provides the ethical considerations for the study.

Chapter 5 presents results and a discussion thereof, in the context of the literature review of Chapter 3, and the theoretical framework of Chapter 2.

Chapter 6 provides a conclusion to the study. It is a summary that ties all chapters together, while at the same time suggesting recommendations for future research.



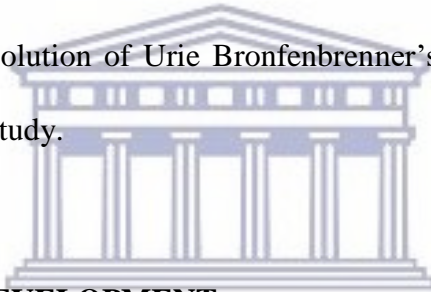
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CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the choice of the theoretical approach adopted for the present study. Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory is a meta-theory that presents a way of thinking about assessing the understanding of people and their impinging environments and which focuses on the development of children within the context of the system of relationships that constitute their environment, and it forms the theoretical underpinning of the study. This chapter gives a detailed overview of the origins and evolution of Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory and further applies it to the current study.



2.2 EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Early childhood refers to a particular stage in childhood, with regard to the various stages of childhood. Schaeffer and DiGeronimo (2000) refer to 4 stages of child development, namely birth to 18 months, 18 to 36 months, 36 months to 6 years, and 6 to 10 years. Authors such as Kehliy (2008) state that the developmental stages include the sensorimotor stage of 0–2 years, the preoccupational stage of 2–6 years, the concrete operational stage of 6–12 years, and the formal operational stage of 12 years and above. This approach takes a cognitive or a psychological stance. While the two definitions are different in character, they point to the early stages of 0–18 and 18–36 months on the one hand, and the sensorimotor and pre-occupational stage on the other hand. While an engagement of these definitions is beyond the scope of the present study, they clearly indicate that a child in kindergarten is in an early childhood stage. This view forms the core of the

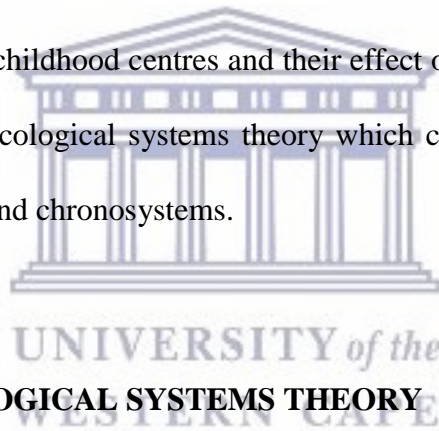
present study and the qualification is with regard to the child's existence in an early development centre. The term 'early development centre' also refers to a 'day care centre'.

South Africa has a national childhood policy, entitled the National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy (National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015), that performs four functions: Firstly, it includes universal availability and equitable access to childhood development through a national integrated system. Secondly, it establishes the organisational and institutional arrangements necessary to aid the provision of early childhood development services and support (National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015). Thirdly, it aims to ensure that there is adequate public funding and resources for access to adequate early childhood development services. Fourthly, its role should be evident in the monitoring and provision of quality early childhood development services and outcomes for children (National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015). The existence of a national engagement leads to the use of a framework, which, if used at optimum capacity, would lead to desirable behaviours of children (National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015). Van Niekerk & Ashley-Cooper (2017) indicates that South Africa's Early Childhood Development Policy has seen growth in its quantitative and qualitative capacities that can be ascribed to increases in government education and social development budgets and the subsequent subsidisation of services at national ECDCs (Atmore *et al.*, 2012).

The ECDCs play a vital role in the behaviour of children. An important role is evident in the aspects of cognitive development of children (Munthali, Mvula & Silo, 2014). This is because there is a strong connotation that early childhood centres play a large role in modeling the

behaviour of children (Kadzamira, Nthara & Kholowa, 2004). This connection flows from the way that adults who engage with the children teach them values that mould their behaviour; thus, practitioner involvement in child activities is instructive in moulding children's behaviour (Kadzamira, Nthara & Kholowa, 2004). The development of positive or desirable behaviour hinges on the practitioner's prudent actions in adopting the necessary goals (Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2004). An illustration of this dynamic is evident in the use of a directive approach, which encourages children to focus on their practitioner. While this creates a sense of dependence of the child on the practitioner, care has to be taken to ensure that a child's behaviour does not become negative when the practitioner is not available (Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2004).

In the light of the role of early childhood centres and their effect on the development of children, the present study applies the ecological systems theory which comprises five systems, i.e. the micro-, meso-, exo-, macro- and chronosystems.



2.3 ORIGIN OF THE ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS THEORY

The ecological systems theory, a meta-theory that presents a way of thinking about assessing the understanding of people and their impinging environments, was first introduced by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1917-2005) (Meyer, 1983). Bronfenbrenner was a Russian-born American developmental psychologist whose work aided the USA government in the formation of the Head Start programme in 1965 (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This work arose against the backdrop of his tenure as a military psychologist for the American army during the Second World War, where he identified and studied the strange behaviour of children in strange situations with strange adults for limited periods (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). His research was instructive in shifting the perspective

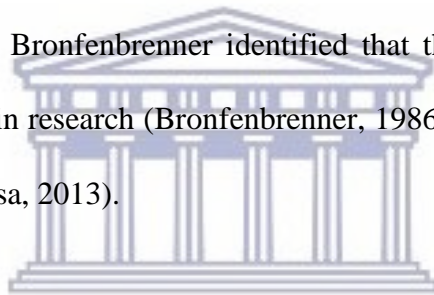
of developmental psychology regarding surroundings and societal influences on child development.

Bronfenbrenner developed the ecological human systems theory to aid the understanding of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). At its core, the theory looked at three classifications that influence human development. These included the micro-, meso-- and exosystems. He expanded it to embrace the macro-system and the chronosystem. He avers that every system has an important impact on a child, a parent or person in authority over a child, the family, and the quality of life in a given social setting. This theory studies human development with regard to the progressive mutual dimension from childhood to adulthood, and the various conditions in one's immediate settings and abstract settings, that one has no control over (Bronfenbrenner, 1986).

The ecological systems theory has undergone a number of changes since it was propounded in 1973 until Bronfenbrenner's death in 2005. The first stage of the emerging theory (1973–1979) was an ecological approach to human development, which presented an ecological model of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). At its core, the theory indicated that an adolescent's responsibility and leadership are based on the relationship that they had with parents, gender and the family's social background (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The motivation for the development of this theory at the time lay in the limited research in psychology and the political demand for social policies regarding the needs of children, adolescents and their families (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). Bronfenbrenner (1979) advocated for a more engaged approach that led to a study of the processes of development. He developed the four layers which he called the micro-, meso--, exo- and

macrosystems and, in consequence, stated that the ecological system or the environment was key to the continual development of individuals (Bronfenbrenner, 1976).

The second stage (1980–1993) involved Bronfenbrenner’s conceptualisation of the environment through contemporary research in human development. In this phase, Bronfenbrenner was motivated by the lack of any explanation of the role played by personal characteristics in the course of human development (Rosa, 2013). This lack led to a revision of the theoretical underpinning that was based on the micro-, meso-, exo- and macro-systems and the subsequent research paradigm that studied human development in the Person-Process-Context model (Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1983). In addition, Bronfenbrenner identified that the theory did not consider the context of time as a key factor in research (Bronfenbrenner, 1986), which led to the introduction of the chronosystem model (Rosa, 2013).



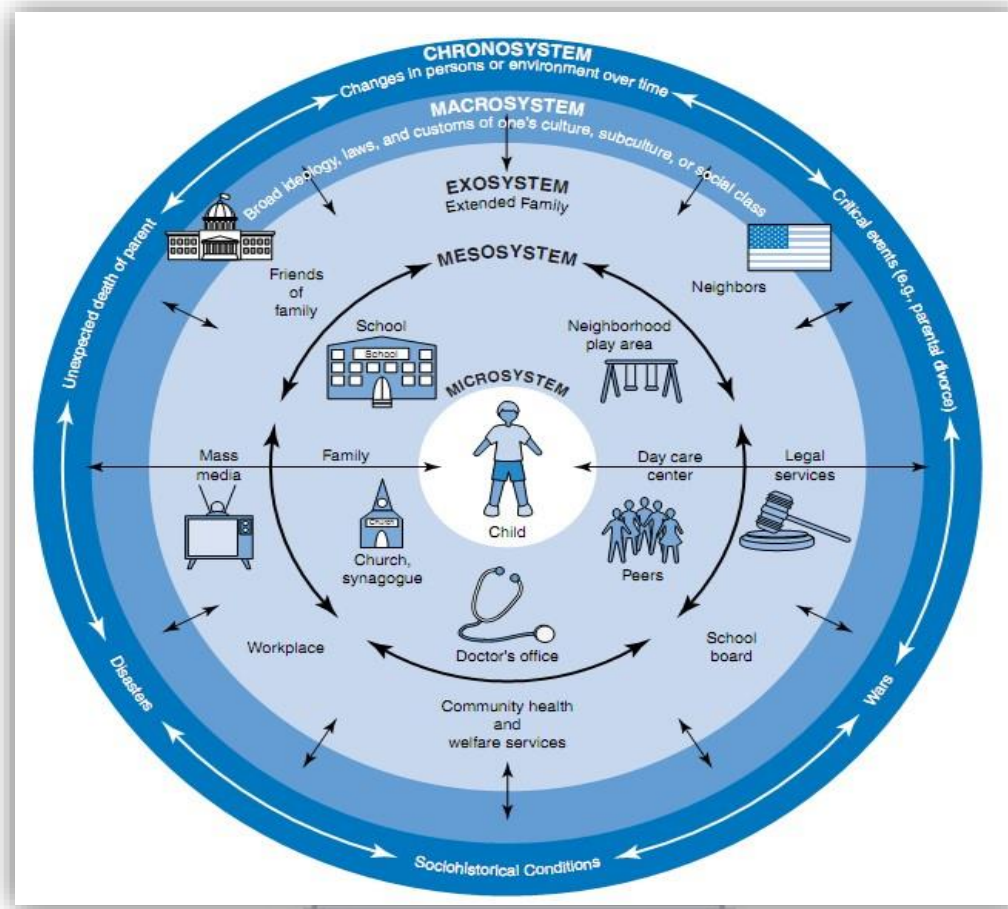
The third stage (1994–2005) involved the indication that individual characteristics, in conjunction with aspects of the context, influence the proximal processes or the engines of development (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000:118). This finding led to the name change to ‘bio-ecological systems theory’ to give emphasis to a child’s own biology as a prime setting that powers the child’s development (Ryan, 2001). Bronfenbrenner primarily named the theory as the ecological systems theory, addressing only the child’s environments, but changed the name in 1994, recognising the child’s biological disposition, and therefore calling it the bio-ecological systems theory (Kaakinen, Gedaly-Duff, Coehlo & Hanson, 2010).

To understand the attitude and perceptions of practitioners of ECDCs and their influence on children’s behaviour, one has to recognise children’s environments and the nature of the

relationship that children have with them. Bronfenbrenner (1979) states that environmental factors affect human development and behaviour. The ecological theory was developed by Bronfenbrenner to recognise the interactional patterns that influence the behaviour of the individual (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2010). Ecological systems theory also relates to children's development within the context of the system of relationships that form their environment. It outlines complex 'layers' of the environment, with each layer having an influence on children's development. Each individual exists between these layers of social relationships, friendship networks, organisations, culture and society (Donald et al., 2010). Bronfenbrenner further suggests that it is the face-to-face interaction between children and other people in their direct environment that will determine the development of those children.

2.4 DESCRIPTION OF THE BIO-ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS THEORY

Figure 2.1 presents the five layers involved in Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory, and is followed by a detailed discussion of each system's influence on children's behaviour.



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Figure 2.1: Diagrammatic illustration of Bronfenbrenner’s bio-ecological model (Adopted from (Kaakinen, Geduly-Duff, Coehlo & Hanson, 2010; Wilmshurst, 2013))

2.4.1 The microsystem

A microsystem is defined as

... a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by developing a person in a given face-to-face setting with particular physical and material features, and

containing other persons with distinctive characteristics of temperament, personality, and systems of belief ... (Bronfenbrenner, 1994: 1645).

Berk (2000) views the microsystem as the closest environment for a child and includes the relationships, interactions and structures with which a child can uphold direct interactions and contact. These structures in the immediate environment of a child include family (signifies parents), neighbourhood (community and school), and early childhood centres (childcare environment), signifying that practitioners have direct and indirect influences on a child's behaviour (Ryan, 2001). Direct interpersonal interactions include bidirectional relationships such as child-parent at home, child-friend at an early childhood centre, child-practitioner, and so on (Berk, 2000; Donald & Dawes, 2000; Adamsons *et al.*, 2007). Conversely, children can also affect the beliefs and behaviour of their parents. Bronfenbrenner calls these bi-directional influences and he shows how they occur amongst all levels of the environment (Ryan, 2001). The interaction of structures within a layer and interactions of structures between layers is central to this theory. At the microsystem level, bi-directional influences are strongest and have the highest influence on children, because the interactions at external levels can still influence the internal structures (Ryan, 2001). This is a re-engagement of Bronfenbrenner's perception that the ecological theory uses the concept of process as a dynamic interaction between the person and the environment through as a developmental process (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Research suggests that the quality of involvement of parents with their children has behavioural benefits. Adamson & Johnson (2013) use the concept of the quality of time within the microsystem to affect the behaviour of children. With particular regard to fathers, they indicate that their quality of time other than the concept of mere contact is instructive in forging the behavioural outcomes

of the children. In contrast with this research, engagement in the microsystem informs the nature of relationships that a child has with practitioners in early childhood settings as key players in the behaviour of children (Adamsons, O'Brien & Pasley, 2007). It should be noted, however, that the effect of practitioners on children is linked to the behaviour that the children receive at home. As such, the concept of the child as a person with regard to sex, gender and characteristics is moulded by the microsystem (Adamsons, *et al.*, 2007).

2.4.2 The meso-system

The meso-system, which is the next level of the layer and along with the microsystem has the most direct influence on the developing child, ‘...comprises the interrelations among two or more settings in which the developing person actively participates...’ (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:25). As such, the meso-system is ‘a set of associated micro-systems’ (Dawes & Donald, 2000:4) and works as a linkage between the microsystem structures. This layer provides the connection between the structures of a child’s microsystems (Berk, 2000); for example, it offers the connection between a child’s practitioner and their parents, between their church and neighbourhood, etc. In other words, the meso-system layer provides a link of communication between members of the microsystem, for example, school and family (Kaakinen, *et al.*, 2010; Wilmshurst, 2013).

As an interaction between various microsystems, this study engages the interaction between a family and a school setting (Adamson, *et al.*, 2007), i.e. family engagements with children in a family setting, and engagements between practitioners and children at early childhood centres. The meso-system, as part of the theoretical underpinning, questions the engagement by early childhood centres in moulding the behaviour of children, who come from another closed setting of parental

interactions. A fusion of these two settings and the findings that they bring to this research study is an indication of the viability of the ecological theory in this research(Adamson, et al., 2007).

From a contextual perspective, the meso-system informs this present study through its examination of the potential engagements of family and early childhood centre on the behaviour of children.

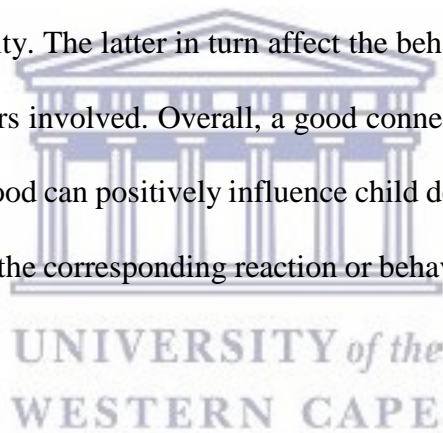
This examination is based on the perception that the meso-system is an engagement of various microsystems, and their effect on an individual (Adamson, *et al.*, 2007). Wilmshurst (2013) is of

the opinion that the value of interaction between the microsystem and the meso-system can have important effects on the development of the child. For example, the meso-system informs the

linkages between its structures and other microsystem structures, such as school, mosque and neighbours within the community. The latter in turn affect the behaviour of a child with regard to

the actions of the various players involved. Overall, a good connection between family, day-care centres, school and neighbourhood can positively influence child development through the actions

of the various stakeholders and the corresponding reaction or behavioural traits of the child (Berk, 2006).



The various layers of children's settings affect their development through the continued interaction with influences in their lives (Ryan, 2001). Research indicates that there is a higher risk to children

in the meso-system and microsystem, owing to the vulnerability that they present in attempting to acclimatise themselves to the environments (Atilola, 2014). It is true that parenting may be a

greater predictor of child behaviour other than practitioner-related instances (Ryan, 2001). A study by Belsky, Vandell, Burchinal, Clarke-Stewart, McCartney and Owen (2007) indicates that

although parenting is a stronger and more consistent predictor of children's development than early child-care experiences, higher vocabulary scores are a result of practitioner-related engagements.

This finding indicates that the ecological theory, with the insights from its layers, is instructive in moulding the behaviour of children at early childhood centres.

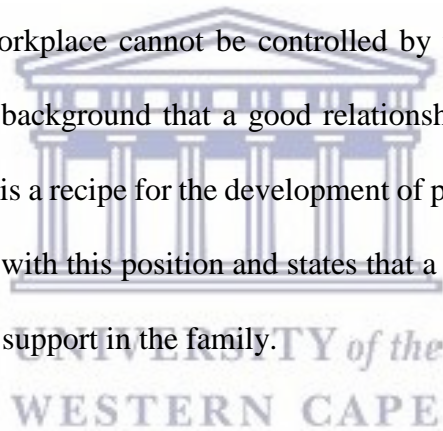
2.4.3 Exosystem

Another important system that informs these relations is the exosystem. This layer refers to a larger community system, in which the child does not function directly, and comprises ‘settings that do not only involve the child directly but also including the interactions of those who have a relationship with the child’ (Dawes & Donald, 2000:5). This statement is an indication that children are affected by other environments, which they do not experience directly. According to Berk (2000), the structures in this layer influence children’s development by interacting with some structure in their microsystem. This definition takes the concept further by clarifying the effect of other environments that affect persons in children’s lives. For example, parent workplace schedules, community-based family resources and parents’ relationships with their colleagues, may affect their development (Kaakinen, *et al.*, 2010; Wilmshurst, 2013). Children might not be directly involved at this level, but they feel the positive or negative forces involved with the interactions with their own system. Hackonen (2007) acknowledges that various environments may affect people by virtue of their indirect participation.

Rogers (2010) relates the exosystem with other factors in the social and economic context and their effect on individuals. He asserts that the influence may be direct through the actions of a parent’s colleagues, or indirectly from factors that are beyond the control of either the parent or the school. Where the behaviour of a parent or sibling with colleagues is positive, lessons might be learn from them. Another perspective may be instructive in appreciating the exosystem. Johnson (2008:3) refers to the position that it represents the ‘larger social system, and encompasses events,

contingencies, decisions, and policies over which the developing person has no influence'. This position represents a lack of an ability to control the effects of a larger environment. The point of departure in this system is therefore the inability of the developing person to control the trajectory that this layer presents.

The key feature to appreciating the existence of an exosystem is in establishing an outer circle of people who are indirectly involved in children's development, such as the parents' employers, or family healthcare workers (Leonard, 2011). The existence of the exosystem presents a unidirectional influence that directly or indirectly affects the developing person. For instance, the demands on parents in their workplace cannot be controlled by their children, yet they have a strong effect. It is against this background that a good relationship between these two systems (family and work environment) is a recipe for the development of positive and desirable behaviour in children. Berk (2006) agrees with this position and states that a good relationship is needed for positive child development and support in the family.

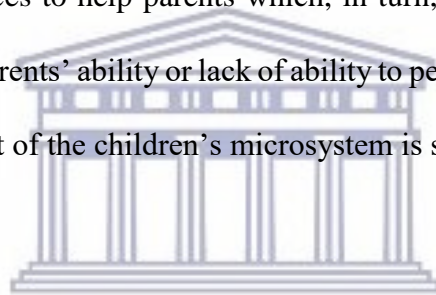


2.4.4 The macro-system

The macro-system 'refers to the political and cultural level of influence on the other levels of the system within which the child is a participant' (Dawes & Donald, 2000:5) such as families' unique use of methods of parenting which are based on their belief systems. It is evident that all layers of the bio-ecological systems theory play a part in child development and shaping behaviour and are hence relevant for the present study. Johnson (2008) refers to the macro-system as the 'social blueprint' of a given culture, subculture or broad social context that is governed by a pattern of embedded values, beliefs, lifestyles and customs (Berk, 2000). This is another example of a

unidirectional influence on an individual's micro-, meso-- and exosystems, as well. It follows that the cultural, political, social and economic perceptions of a given society affect engagements between the layers, which poses the question of whether the perceptions and modes of dealing with a child at an early education centre are a direct response to the macro-system.

On the basis of the cultural values, customs and laws that inform the macro-system, it has serious influences on all other interactions in all other layers (Berk, 2000). For example, if it is the belief of the culture that parents ought to be the only people in charge of raising their children, that culture is less likely to provide resources to help parents which, in turn, affects the structures in which parents fulfill their roles. The parents' ability or lack of ability to perform that responsibility toward their children within the context of the children's microsystem is similarly affected (Berk, 2000).



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2.4.5 The chronosystem

The outer layer – the chronosystem – includes the dimension of time as it relates to children's environments. Components within this system can be either outer, such as the timing of a parent's death, or inner, such as the physiological changes that occur in childhood (Ryan, 2012). As children grow older, they might respond and react in different ways to environmental changes, and could be able to determine how those changes will influence them. The chronosystem denotes the dimension of time, in which events take place, in an individual's environment. Events such as changing schools or practitioners also influence the other layers of the system (Kaakinen, *et al.*, 2010; Wilmshurst, 2013). By creating this system, Bronfenbrenner was acknowledging the inevitability of change over time, which consequently influences the behaviour of children with the developments that occupy them (Bronfenbrenner, 1994:1979).

2.5 Tenets of the ecological systems theory

This theory rests on four factors, which are instructive in understanding children's behaviour in the context of their environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1998); they are the person, process, context and time (Adamsons, O'Brien & Pasley, 2007). These four factors engage a child's own characteristics, dispositions and all the relevant surroundings starting from home to community over a long period. With regard to the **person**, the individual has characteristics such as gender, race, age and previous experiences that shape their recognition, attitudes and expectations in a given setting (Wood & Repetti, 2004). Although a child is at the centre of their unique ecological system, various circumstances within their immediate and subsequent surroundings define their behaviour and the ability of the environment to mould their values, beliefs and behaviours (Bronfenbrenner, 1998).

The **process** is a key factor in this theory. It refers to the interaction between the person and the environment where development occurs (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 2005). According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), a child affects and is affected by the settings in which they spend time. Where a child spends time in an early childhood centre, their behaviour may be affected by the people who interact with them; this may have positive or negative effects on the child's behaviour. Based on this position, the use of an early childhood centre as the study setting presents a platform to ask questions about child-related behavioural issues. Bronfenbrenner (1995) states that the treatment accorded to a child invites a reciprocal behaviour as a reaction. The response that is a determinant of a child's developing behaviour may also be an extension of the treatment that the child receives at home (Darling, 2007).

The **context** or setting may influence an individual. Bronfenbrenner (1979) introduced the concept of four systems that influence an individual's development. These include the micro-, meso-, exo- and chronosystems. With regard to the present study, the most influential setting is the domestic or family setting, which is the microsystem. This study aims to show that time spent in a day-care centre is vital to a child's development because a child-care environment is like an extended family. The interactions in family and pre-school are vital in influencing children's behaviour (King & Dockrell; 2016). The various experiences in these immediate surroundings, such as family and day-care centre, inform a child's development. As a result, this proximity with the people in these settings is instructive for human development. These surroundings offer behavioural settings where 'a pattern or sequence of behaviour regularly occurs' in relation to how a practitioner or parent treats a child (McLaren & Hawe, 2005:7).

Closely related to the above, surroundings such as the parents' workplace are also instructive in forging the behaviour of children if the parents' engagements affect their disposition when they deal with their children at home (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The same interaction is possible where a practitioner's dispositions at home affect their relationship with children at an early development centre. The lack of direct involvement in these surroundings influences the socialisation of children.

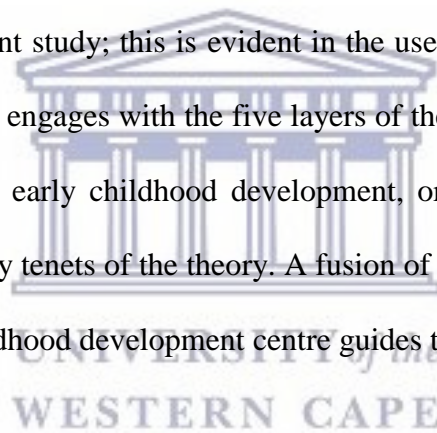
This theoretical model may thus be used to qualify an established behavioural paradigm (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994).

The fourth component is **time**. Bronfenbrenner discusses the effects of the quality of these engagements as key components in human development over a period of time (Bronfenbrenner, &

Morris; 2006). This concept of time poses the perception that where a child has a good relationship with a parent, they may also have good relationships with a practitioner, grandparent or peer. While these engagements may vary, their effect on the child should not be underestimated (Li, Johnson, Han, Andrews, Kendall, Strazdins & Dockery, 2014). Time is an important aspect in the bioecological theory as it allows the realisation of uniqueness of cases that affect children in their life course (Bronfenbrenner, 1995).

2.6 Conclusion

The present chapter deals with Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory, showing how the theory is instructive in guiding the present study; this is evident in the use of the person, process, context and time model that adequately engages with the five layers of the theory. Other key aspects that the chapter deals with include early childhood development, origins and a description of the bioecological theory and the key tenets of the theory. A fusion of these concepts in the context of child behaviour at an early childhood development centre guides this study.



CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter analysed the theoretical framework that guides the study. This chapter explores the literature on the role that ECDCs play in shaping children's behaviour. The chapter starts with a focus on early childhood development and its relation to children and their

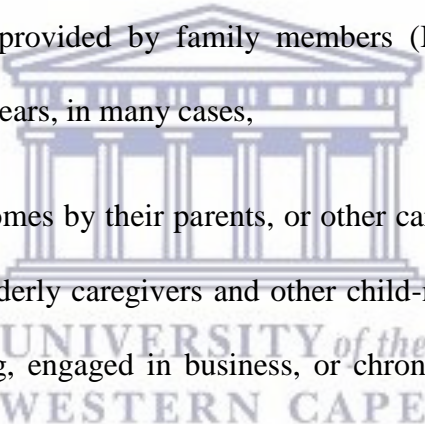
development. The second section of the chapter begins by defining behaviour, and proceeds to discuss the role of ECDCs in shaping children's behaviours.

3.2 Early child development

Early child development (ECD) refers to the period of human life before and after birth until eight years of age. It is a critical time for the complete and healthy cognitive, emotional and physical growth of children (Agbenyega, 2015). ECD is a holistic approach that stimulates 'cognitive, emotional, physical, mental, communication, social and spiritual development of children from conception until they enter formal schooling (i.e., Grade R) or reach the age of 8 years' (National Department of Social Development, 2015: 14). It encompasses a range of services or support intended for infants and young children, their families or caregivers, from government or civil societies in order to promote early child development (National Department of Social Development, 2015:15). ECD programmes have proven to yield both immediate and expected long-term outcomes for children and communities (Agbenyega, 2013; UNICEF, 2001). Chi, Kim and Kim (2016) posit that early childhood is a critical period where individuals build up basic competencies and self-concepts that influence their future developmental trajectories.

Furthermore, Pino-Pasternak and Whitebeard (2010) state that teaching children language and communication skills enables them to express their needs in a socially acceptable way. Similarly, Preusse (2008) stresses the complexity of early child development wherein cognitive, emotional, linguistic and aesthetic skills are closely intertwined, and considers social skills a vital part of it. Therefore, the main purpose of ECD is to protect the child's rights to optimal development: cognitive, emotional, social and physical (van Niekerk & Ashley-Cooper, 2017).

In the South African context, an ECD centre refers to any facility where more than six children are cared for temporarily or part-time, away from their parents. The centre can be ‘a crèche, a day care centre for young children, pre-school, and/or after school care... It can admit babies, toddlers, and/or pre-school aged children’ (Department of Social Development, 2014:xi). Early child education practices after birth start at home, and can subsequently take many forms across various contexts and different ages of children. The settings can be formal or informal. Informal childcare is understood as ‘unregulated childcare’ as opposed to ‘government-regulated childcare’ that is often centre-based (Bryson, Brewer, Sibieta, & Butt, 2016). In South Africa, many young children receive informal care, mainly provided by family members (Budlender & Lund, 2011). In particular, children from 0 to 2 years, in many cases,



are cared for in their homes by their parents, or other caregivers, including members of the extended family, elderly caregivers and other child-minders while their parents are away at work, studying, engaged in business, or chronically ill or disabled (National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015:39).

In many cases in South Africa, care is non centre-based (van Niekerk & Ashley-Cooper, 2017) and most ECD centres are managed by non-profit organisations and the private sector (van Niekerk & Ashley-Cooper, 2017). The role of the government is to regulate and subsidise programs that conform to the norms (Martin, 2016; van Niekerk & Ashley-Cooper, 2017). Because of this predicament, disadvantaged children have the least access since their parents or caregivers cannot afford to pay the required fees (van der Berg, 2015). It is also important to note that many centres

fail to meet registration norms required by the government in order to be subsidised (van Niekerk & Ashley-Cooper, 2017).

Learning and education at an ECD centre needs to be age-appropriate, exciting and culturally sensitive (National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015; Smith, 2014). According to Kim and Lake (2016), stimulation of children needs to start as early as possible, with various activities such as reading, talking, singing and playing with them. Gradually, young children develop their language, motor, social, literacy and numeracy skills, and numerous other competencies, including physical activity (Chi & Kim, 2016; Preuss, 2008; van der Berg, 2015). There is no universality with regard to ECD programmes; they vary enormously according to contextual needs and objectives. A UNICEF-led study (2001:1) reports that ‘experiences from ECDC programmes around the world demonstrate a promise for children’s well-being and for that of their families and communities.’ In the same source, ECD benefits are further highlighted (pp. 7-11):

- At the most basic level of survival, ECDC programmes reduce child mortality.
- They facilitate economic growth and transformation by giving parents and caregivers of children the opportunity and flexibility to join the labour force.
- Beyond survival, ECDC programmes pursue optimal development.
- ECDC programmes serve as a ‘first line of defence’ in dealing with disability and development delay.
- Integrated ECDC programmes can also modify and reduce gender-related inequities by enabling girls to stay longer in school and promoting fathers’ roles in parenting.
- Investing in ECDC builds social capital.

There is also evidence that ECD programmes contribute to reduced school dropout and repetition rates, and improved health behaviours (Hahn, Rammohan, Truman, Milstein, Johnson, Muntana, 2014; Meier, Lemmer & Niron, 2015; Munthali, Mvula & Slip, 2014; UNICEF, 2001).

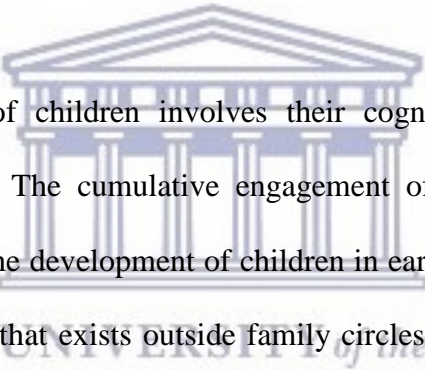
3.3 Holistic approach to early child development

A holistic approach that encompasses various aspects of human development requires that the educators use practices that engage the physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing of a child (Stach, 2017).

With regard to physical needs, ECD Guidelines (2006) require that the building where the ECD is located is physically clean and safe for children. They require that caution against physical problems such as fire, accidents and other hazards is taken (ECD Guidelines, 2006). Further, internal areas must be clean and safe for young children regarding space for free movement and indoor and outdoor sports (ECD Guidelines, 2006). Where there are disabled children, areas should be disability friendly to ensure that children with disabilities are not discriminated against because of their disabilities.

Research on the emotional wellbeing of children requires that children be in a space where they are able to engage their experiences. As a result, positive emotional experiences that are illuminated as a result of engagements between the practitioners as caregivers and children, act as building blocks for their social and emotional well-being as infants (Bagdi & Vacca, 2005). It has been proposed that amalgamation of the three principles of promotion, prevention and intervention within a systems framework (child–parent environment) will enable early childhood practitioners

to foster the emotional health and well-being of all children and families, especially those individual children who are more vulnerable because of the presence of multiple risk factors (Mistry, Minkovitz, Riley, Johnson, Grason, Dubay & Guyer, 2012). It follows, according to the concept which Bagdi and Vacca (2005) propose, that promotion should engage incentives that depict awareness regarding early brain development (Bagdi & Vacca, 2005). Prevention relates to proactive strategies regarding potential factors in emotional wellness among children. The intervention requires holistic or all-encompassing approaches, which aid the engagement with children's needs (Bagdi & Vacca, 2005). There is therefore a need to establish how the ECDC environment influences the holistic welfare of children.



The psychological wellbeing of children involves their cognitive, physical and emotional development (NIECDP, 2015). The cumulative engagement of all these principles leads to progress; this is evidenced by the development of children in early childhood centres, as crucial points of contact in the society that exists outside family circles (NIECDP, 2015). The revised National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy (NIECDP, 2015) reiterates that the mental and physical health of children and adults is instructive in the formation of comprehensive programmes that offer a foundation for the improved health of the nation. This is an indication that the National Policy of Early Childhood Development should be looked at not through the single lens of just having children attend ECDs but a multifaceted lens that engages all the physical, emotional and psychological aspects of children.

3.3.1 Practitioners' role in early childhood development

The term 'practitioners' refers to 'staff providing ECD services through formal ECD centre services, family services and playgroups and training, as well as those providing management support services to these workers' (National Department of Social Development, 2015:19). In an ECDC environment, practitioners play multiple roles. These may vary slightly, depending on the children's ages (Howard, 2010). For children in day-care centres, practitioners must be able to understand and respond appropriately to their basic needs such as feeding and toilet training, in a clean, safe and secure environment. Furthermore, they must be able to manage young children's routine care, including playing, singing, being read to, and sleeping. Additionally, practitioners must be able to comfort the distressed ones, and promote good interaction between children. In case of an emergency, they are also expected to respond in an effective way (Motshedi, 2009). As children move up to pre-school, practitioners nurture and encourage their holistic development (Boniface, 2007).

- guiding the process of helping children develop or strengthen multiple skills, including language, numeracy, motor and prosocial (Preusse, 2008)
- assessing children's developmental needs and deficiencies so that early remedies can be applied (Motshedi, 2009).
- ensuring they manage children's behaviour appropriately, without using corporal punishment (Motshedi, 2009; Boniface, 2007); they also play a big role in children's protection. In the latter case, they must be able to identify signs of child abuse, and take the necessary action (Boniface, 2007).

- interacting with parents, as well as other professionals, in order to discuss children's progress (Pape, 2015; Childcare Education Institute, 2008)
- acting as role-models for young children, especially in inspiring a thirst for learning (Palmer, 2016). According to this author, love for reading, and learning discovery, is rooted in preschool.
- planning and organising lessons, preparing engaging learning materials, and facilitating learning (Childcare Education Institute, 2008);
- keeping children safe from harm, and being attentive to children to determine their needs (Childcare Education Institute, 2008).

The role of principals is to ensure that ECD centres run smoothly, by attending to administrative work (financial reports, centres' policies and procedures, referral letters, for example), by networking and, in some instances, by initiating fundraising activities in order to improve the financial situation, especially in under-resourced centres (van Niekerk & Ashley-Cooper, 2017). Moreover, principals support and encourage ECD staff, especially in terms of arranging for them to attend courses to improve the quality of their services (van Niekerk & Ashley-Cooper, 2017). In short, the roles of practitioners in ECD centres vary greatly, depending on the children's ages and whether the practitioners are part of the teaching staff, or whether they are part of the managing staff.

3.4 Behaviour

Behaviour is loosely defined as a person's action and response to feelings, emotions or needs (Gallway, 2017). It is generally understood as individuals' ways of conducting themselves in society or towards other people (Hornby, 2000). According to Verplanken & Roy (2016),

behaviour describes actions that can be observed and repeated. Furthermore, behaviour can be measured as a way of establishing whether it is the desirable behaviour that is expected from children (Verplanken & Roy 2016; Davis, Campbell, Hildon, Hobbs & Mickie, 2015). These definitions have similar concepts in common. First, they look at behaviour as an outcome of one's conduct as a result of one's action or response. Secondly, one may improve the nature of another's behaviour by their actions, and through constant monitoring.

Globally, there is growing concern about increasing problem behaviours and behavioural disorders in children (Chi & Kim, 2016). The same authors point out that an accumulation of problem behaviours in early childhood can predict behavioural problems in adulthood. Healthy behaviour forms an integral part of holistic early child development and adjustment (Chi & Kim, 2016).

Research indicates a mutual influence between children's cognitive competence and their behaviour (Lee & Bierman, 2015; Logue, 2007). In this regard, some researchers have found a link between cognitive ability and internalising and externalising problems. Many researchers make a distinction between externalising behaviours such as aggression and disruption, and internalising behaviours such as depression and social withdrawal (Bao, Jing, Jin, Hu, Liu & Hu, 2016; Bayer, Ukoumune, Wake, Abdi, Hiscock, 2012; Maguire, Niens, McCann & Connolly, 2016). As an example, they found an association between attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and limited capacity of working memory (Chi & Kim, 2016). While some believe that behaviour problems in early childhood may be transitory, research has shown that many of the problems appear to be stable, or even exacerbate over time (Bayer, *et al.*, 2012; McGuire, *et al.*, 2016) state that when children display externalising behaviour at a younger age, they are more likely to develop behaviour disorders, such as anti-social behaviours and juvenile delinquency, in the future.

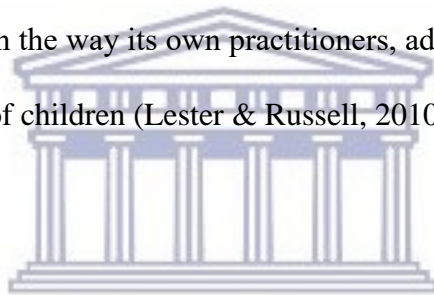
In particular, there is more evidence to suggest that aggression found in young children continues throughout their development (Reebye, 2005).

There is also evidence that children's behaviours influence their academic performance. According to Sheridan, Koziol, Clarke, Rispoli and Coutts (2014), behaviours such as self-control, persistence and engagement predict academic success. On the other hand, disruption, non-compliance and aggression are predictive of negative long-term outcomes. From this perspective, cognitive ability can be a preventative factor for problem behaviour in young children (Chi & Kim, 2016). Evidence also shows that child behaviour is strongly influenced and changed by the behaviour of their caregiver, especially in the first years of a child's life (Kivijarvi, Voeten, Raiha, Lertola & Irwin, 2011; Santelices, Olhaberry, Pérez-Salas & Carvacho, 2009; Tucker, van Zandviirt, Burke & Irwin, 2011), which starts from the time of birth of the child to specific years of age. In many cases, the mother is the main caregiver of her baby after birth. Her closeness to the newborn helps the baby to develop feelings of trust and safety with her, as opposed to other persons. In the study by Li, Liu, Lv, Xu and Huntsinger (2015) which has as its aim to establish the influences of mother-child relationships on the social behaviour of only Chinese children in early childhood, the authors found that mother-child closeness positively influenced the children's social skills. The study concluded that it is important for mothers to improve closeness, especially with rural children.

From the very early stages of life, a mother and her infant learn to communicate through body language and verbal interactions, thus creating a bond or attachment (Santelices, *et al.*, 2009). Koren-Karie, Oppenheimer, Yuval-Adler and Mor (2013) argue that sensitive mothers are expected to be able to understand their children with challenging behaviours and adapt their

caregiving accordingly. Other scholars have advanced that infants with secure attachments with their parents are at an advantage not only of acquiring social skills, but also of developing competencies in language cognitive and emotional development (Erygit-Madzwamuse & Barnes, 2014).. Preusse, 2008). On the other hand, if attachment does not happen, children are more likely to display anti-social behaviours.

Despite the benefits of healthy exchanges between infants and their immediate family environments, working mothers in many cases have to entrust their infants to day-care centres at the end of their maternity leave. The relevance of the ECD is in its role of shaping the behaviour of children, with an emphasis on the way its own practitioners, adults and caregivers' actions and responses guide the behaviour of children (Lester & Russell, 2010).



3.4.1 ECD centre's role in shaping the behaviour of children

ECD centres serve as a link between the home and the children both in teaching and in the behaviour of children before going to school. The literature shows that multiple factors may contribute to children's behavioural problems in ECD centres (Gardner & Shaw, 2008). Stevenson, McCannLaw, Mullee, Petrou, Worsfold & Kennedy, 2011; Shonkoff, Linda, Jacques and Zulfiqar, 2012). Some of those factors include: type and quality of practitioner-child relationships, practitioners' qualifications, programmes and infrastructure, child's gender and vulnerable children.

The role of an ECD is to develop cognitive aspects of children's lives. This role is based, however, on the quality of the ECD. Shonkoff, Linda, Jacques and Zulfiqar (2012) state that infants and toddlers are in a position to become attached to their caregivers, and be more socially oriented than children in poor or minimally adequate care centres. This finding is an indication that while an ECD plays a great role in forging the behaviour of children, the quality of such engagements is pivotal. As a result, an ECD moulds children's behaviour by the child-care experiences they offer children during infancy. Other studies show that the use of interventions by ECD centres helps children to develop cognitively (Keys, Farkas, Burchinal, Duncan, Vandell, Li & Howes, 2013).

3.4.2 Child characteristics and behaviour in early childhood development

3.4.2.1 Gender

Literature suggests that boys in early development centres may be at higher risk of developing behaviour problems than girls do. Indeed, some studies have found more negative interaction patterns between boys with regard to their mothers, fathers and practitioners than girls do (Belsky et al., 2007). Furthermore, Logue (2007) pointed out that in the USA, among pre-kindergarteners expelled for lacking behavioural readiness for academic learning, boys were represented 4.5 times more than girls. The author advocates for prekindergarten standards of high level social learning, and for social workers to complement practitioners' work, especially regarding children who need special attention, instead of obstructing them from pre-kindergarten experiences by expelling them. Similarly, in a study by Adriany and Warin (2014) from a feminist post-structuralist perspective, the researchers suggest adding another dimension to child-centred approach with regard to care, by respecting differences. In other words, the 'other', including non-traditional gender behaviour, should be acknowledged within child-centred discourse. Other earlier studies

have also indicated that mother's employment may have a positive influence where the mother is able to adjust the mode of employment and to cater for the needs of the children generally (Kühhirt & Klein, 2017).

Gender differences have also been noted in regard to social behaviour. Some differences have been related to television viewing and others not, with boys showing more anti-social behaviours such as physical attack, verbal aggression and destructiveness (Charlton, Charlie, Panting, Davie, Cole, & Whitmarsh, 2000). Recent research on 24 girls and 55 boys confirms and indicates that sexual differences account for the diverse behaviours by children on account of their gender (Backer van Ommeren, Koot, Scheeren & Begeer, 2016).

3.4.2.2 Child's temperament

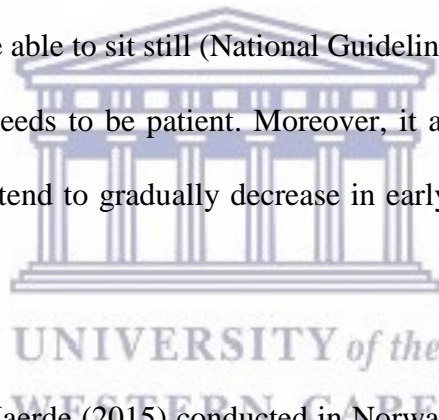
Yoleri (2014) argues that high levels of behavioural problems among preschool children are attributable to the difficulty of adaptation to the more structured school environment. Other contributing factors include children's temperamental dimensions (Santelices, *et al.*, 2009; National Quality Framework, 2014; Yoleri, 2014). Each child is unique, with their own personality traits for potential behaviours. A large body of evidence has demonstrated that some behavioural issues, internalised or externalised, are connected to temperament (Yoleri, 2014).

Temperaments such as anxiety, depression, social withdrawal, and somatic complaints are some internalising problems, while aggressive and delinquent behaviours are examples of externalising problems. It follows that these are instructive in forging the nature of behaviour that a child will display (Bureau, Ann Easlerbrooks & Lyons-Ruth, 2009). The present researcher agrees with

Yoleri who argues that it is important to to know children’s personality features, monitor their behaviour, and take respective measures when necessary’ (Yoleri, 2014:1). A practitioner’s interaction with a learner whose temperament they know places the latter in a position to advise how to deal with behavioural problems. This is possible if practitioners develop the right attitudes and embrace learners as they are and make efforts to help them to improve (Adamsons, O’Brien & Pasley, 2007).

3.4.2.3 Child’s age

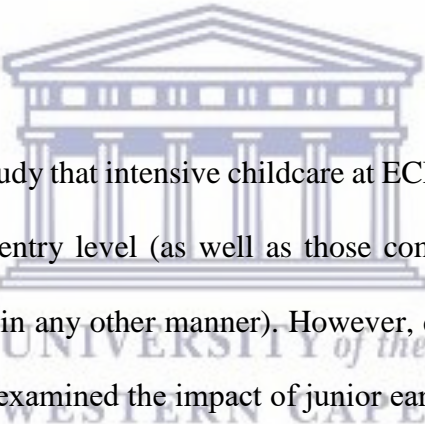
Children’s challenging behaviour may present as a result of a developmental stage. For example, a two-year-old child may not be able to sit still (National Guideline Framework, 2014). Therefore the caregiver of such a child needs to be patient. Moreover, it appears that some externalising behaviours such as aggression tend to gradually decrease in early childhood (Chi, Kim & Kim, 2016).



In a study by Zachrisson and Naerde (2015) conducted in Norway among 939 children aged six months through to four years, a link was found between age of entry into early childhood education care and aggression at the age of two. On the other hand, the effect of age of entry on aggression seemed to fade away between the ages of two and four. Another large study by Lekhal (2012) in Norway shows a weak link between aggression and joining an early childhood centre at the age of two. While this research points to the fact that there is aggression at the age of two, it did not suggest the possibility of bullying, where a child is more than two years old.

3.4.2.4 Amount of time spent in ECD centres

There has been inconsistent literature regarding the influence of time that young children spend in childcare centres. Some researchers have demonstrated that extensive care at those centres is susceptible for developing behaviours such as aggression in children (McCartney, 2004). There are studies that confirm the evidence, attributing externalising behaviours such as aggression and disobedience to more time spent in child-care centres in the first years of life, as well as conflicting behaviours with adults in those centres (McCartney, 2004). However, it began to emerge that in all cases considered, quality of care could play a moderating role (Berry, Blair, Willoughby, Garrett-Peters, Vernon-Feagans, Mills-Koonce, & Family Life Project Key Investigators, 2016).



Thompson (2014) found in his study that intensive childcare at ECD centres could benefit children with challenging behaviours at entry level (as well as those coming from low socio-economic settings (SES) or disadvantaged in any other manner). However, disagreements have been found among researchers. Studies that examined the impact of junior early childhood care on children's behavioural development, regardless of regional differences and individual/household factors, are instructive (Fernald, Marchman & Weisleder, 2013). They showed that attending preschool did not reduce the risk gap for behavioural difficulties between children from lower SES and those from higher SES. On the other hand, another study (Lee & Bierman, 2015) investigated the simultaneous influence of classroom emotional support and practitioner-student relationships on socio-economically disadvantaged children's behavioural adjustment to elementary school, in order to find unique and shared associations with child progress. Results showed significant unique associations between each type of early childhood support and children's aggressive behaviours,

social withdrawal, learning engagement, and emergent literacy skills in first grade, controlling for their prekindergarten adjustment (Lee & Bierman, 2015). In addition, learning engagement significantly mediated the association between a supportive relationship with the pre-school practitioner and first-grade literacy skills (Lee & Bierman, 2015). Additionally, in a systematic review, Hahn, Rammohan, Truman, Milstein, Jonhson and Muntaner (2014) concluded that intensive ECD programmes targeting low-income and minority communities may improve, among other things, healthy behaviours.

3.4.3 Early childhood development centres and behaviour

3.4.3.1 Practitioner qualities

The training of ECD practitioners should be invested in, by upgrading their qualifications and developing clear career paths (Lee & Bierman, 2015). National government has a major role to play; it has to ensure that there is an adequate number of qualified practitioners to offer appropriate skills to early childhood centres. In essence, the quality of the practitioner is instructive in forging the way forward. A central question is which qualities should practitioners have for dealing with cases concerning children.

A practitioner should be caring. Consequently, their approach to ‘care’ in the context of ECD centres is to view it as an extension of a working mother’s care. Therefore, the practitioner at this level is expected to provide a ‘warm and continuous attachment’ (Adriany & Warin, 2014: 317).

This perception has the consequence of giving early education personnel a low status as the work they do is viewed as intellectually less demanding and rather requiring the investment of emotions.

The caring nature of a practitioner leads to desirable behavioural outcomes in children, through

the former's ability to have deeper understanding of child development and early education issues (Sheridan, Edwards, Marvin & Knoche, 2009).

In addition, practitioners/practitioners should not only be responsive to children's needs, but also help them to develop language skills, and involve them in activities that stimulate learning multiple skills, including pro-social behaviours (Preusse, 2008). Owing to the amount of time that young children spend in group settings, Dobbs and Arnold (2009) assign a significant role to practitioners in shaping experiences with peers. These authors have noted that children's aggression is linked to two main theories: the deficit theory and the excess theory. In the former, children are aggressive because they lack something. For example, some preschoolers may resort to bullying because of their inability to express their needs or wants. Such children would need to learn to be expressive. Excess theory posits that children are aggressive because of their inability to cope with high levels of anger. Therefore, they need to learn to cope with excessive anger. The amount of responsiveness that a practitioner invests in a child is evident in the latter's ability to be emotionally attached to, and inclined to confide in, the practitioner (Votruba-Drzal, Coley, Maldonado-Carreño, Li-Grining & Chase-Lansdale, 2010).

In Columbia, for example, where studies had previously shown low levels of education among care providers, the introduction of a vocational education programme offering appropriate training in child development and care, made a remarkable difference in terms of quality of care and education provisions (Bernal, 2015). Furthermore, Hasan (2012) stresses the need for qualified nursery school practitioners who master the curriculum and have a good knowledge of pedagogy as well as the skills that they have to impart to children. Neuman (2016) points to challenges in

rural areas of recruiting and retaining personnel, especially those who are qualified. Furthermore, Bernal (2015) and Hasan (2012) provide evidence from some recent research to indicate that training can have positive effects on practitioner behaviour and interactions as a result of adopting child-centred practices, which in turn can lead to positive children's outcomes.

In ECD centres, practitioners and caregivers need training to boost their confidence, especially when dealing with children with additional needs (Harms, Clifford & Cryer, 2014; Logue, 2007). In South Africa, the project Education Africa (2016) focusing on early childhood development was initiated in 2008 to assist caregivers looking after children in impoverished communities. As many of the former have limited education, the project provides them with training and, at the same time, assists in the management of preschools. While this project seems to relate to the administration of early childhood centres, it provided opportunity for the interaction of practitioner with learners or children. It may be said that proper engagement in the interactions has a propensity to lead to desired outcomes.



3.4.3.2 Practitioner-child relationship

In ECD centres, children engage with practitioners, adults or caregivers and subsequently learn the ways that form their positive social interactions, manage their behaviours and how to think about others, so as to prepare them for school and for their entire lives. In a way similar to that of the parent-child relationship, the literature indicates that practitioner-child relationships vary in nature and quality (Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2010). The influence on children is based on the way that the practitioners act or respond to them. According to McCartney (2007), one way of assessing

child-care quality is to observe behaviours that reflect positive interactions between children and educators on the one hand, and between children and their peers, on the other hand.

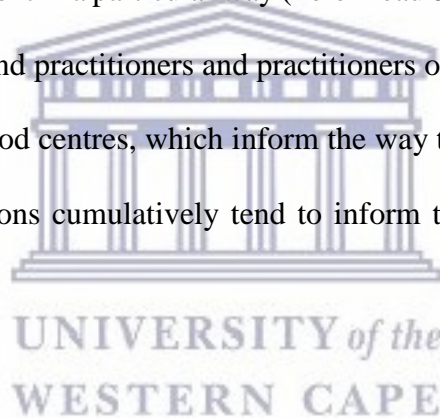
Some studies have found that where the relationship between young children and their practitioners is close and affectionate, it yields positive behaviours (Pianta, Nimetz & Bennett, 1997). Conversely, where the relationship is distant and formal, it will yield negative behaviour (Pianta, Nimetz, & Bennett, 1997). Additionally, recent research confirms that a secure and effective practitioner-child dyad predicts positive interactions and social behaviours in children, while insecurity, less closeness and more conflicting practitioner-child relationships, links to poor social skills and more behaviour problems, both internalising and externalising (Li, Liu, Lv, Xu, Wang & Huntsinger, 2015). This indicates that positive interactions place the practitioner in a perspective that leads to positive and desirable behaviour. The converse is also true, if the relationship between practitioners and children is distant or full of conflict (Baker, 2015).

Studies have pointed out that perceptions and characteristics of practitioners can influence the way they assess the behaviour of children (McClelland, Acock & Morrison, 2006; Wentzel, 2002). In general, educators' relationships need to be positive, respectful, engaging, caring and supportive, thus enhancing children's confidence, abilities and self-esteem (Wentzel, 2002). The literature indicates that quality practitioner-child relationships positively influences child adjustment in preschool years and beyond. On the other hand, a difficult interaction in this dyad may lead to social developmental and behaviour problems (Hamre & Pianta, 2001).

One approach to care in the context of ECD centres is to view it as an extension of the working mother's care. Thus, the practitioner at this level is expected to provide a 'warm and continuous attachment' (Mapedzahama, 2014). In well-run centres, practitioners are not only sensitive and responsive to children's needs, but also help them to develop language skills, and involve them in activities that stimulate learning of multiple skills, including pro-social behaviours (Mitchell, 2014), which as a result, aids the development of desirable behaviour among children.

3.4.3.3 Perceptions and attitudes of practitioners in early childhood development centres

Perceptions have been defined to refer to the disposition or awareness that individuals have about an object, and as a result relate to it in a particular way (Félonneau & Becker, 2008)). In this regard, both parents on the one hand, and practitioners and practitioners on the other hand, have different perceptions about early childhood centres, which inform the way they relate with them as objects in their setting. These perceptions cumulatively tend to inform the need to have them, and the benefits that emerge as a result.



Studies indicate that practitioners have different perceptions of early childhood centres. A study in Finland indicates that practitioners view themselves as leaders who have a responsibility through assessment, planning and ensuring the success of an early childhood programme (Heikka, Halttunen & Waniganayake, 2018). However, these perceptions are not shared with principals or top administrators because the former are seen as abstract individuals who are not adequately positioned to respond to the intricate needs of children (Heikke, *et al.*, 2018). The point of departure in the literature is that it accords this leadership to an early childhood centre's goals other than national goals. As such, this approach indicates a lack of uniformity where early childhood

centres do not engage a national framework; this is, however, not the case in South Africa as there is a national policy on ECD that guides these centres.

These perceptions extend to other areas such as the extra-curricular activities that children engage in at ECD centres. Sandseter's (2013) research in Norway indicates that practitioners allow children to engage in what would be otherwise considered to be risky activities. It is instructive to note that they perceive that these activities aid the development of children's motor and spatial skills (Ball, 2002). It appears that the point of departure is in the practitioner's role of supervision of the learners from the Norwegian cultural perspective that children seldom get hurt (Sandseter, Wyver & Little, 2012; Guldberg, 2009). There is a different perception in other countries, such as Australia, where the practitioner's role is informed by anxiety of children getting hurt and leading to possible litigation (Tovey, 2007). In contrast, the perceptions of practitioners towards their role in other countries, such as the United Kingdom, are informed by the nature of the schools. To this end, practitioners in schools that spend most of the day in natural environments are more liberal towards risky activities than practitioners in traditional schools (Maynard, 2007; Waters & Begley, 2007).

The perceptions of practitioners towards their role need to be evaluated in light of the nature of children; this is especially so where the children have special needs or have disabilities. Parker (2011) states that a moderately positive attitude by practitioners contributes to the success of a child with disabilities. This position, however, points to the existence of a positive attitude and perception, other than the practitioners' perception of their role in the process of interacting with children. Practitioners' perceptions are also instructive regarding the nature of the subject that they

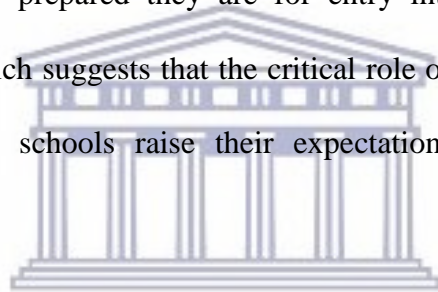
teach the children. According to Edwards (2009), there is a link between how early childhood practitioners support children's scientific learning, and their perception of the way they convey the instructions to the children. Edwards (2009) emphasises that it is important that practitioners have subject knowledge, which in turn influences their confidence in and attitudes toward supporting children's scientific learning. Thus, well-trained practitioners have the ability to take responsibility for the appropriate paedagogical choices that they make to serve the interests of the children under their care (Hadley, 2012). Accordingly, the way that practitioners perceive their role towards children in early childhood centres is instructive in the decisions they make.

According to Rimm-Kaufman (2004), practitioners perceive early childhood centres as a determinant in children's early learning and preparation for their later entry into school. As a result of these perceptions, there have been high expectations about the effect of early childhood centres on children. These perception have acted as a burden on the part of practitioners to ensure that children are treated in a specific way at the these centres (Heystek, 2015). Ogunyemi and Ragpot (2015) are of the opinion that the positive perceptions that practitioners have about early childhood centres, are presented in the activities that children engage in while there. Practitioners also perceive early childhood centres as an important link that creates a relationship between practitioners and parents on one hand, and practitioners and children on the other (Dawes & Donald, 2000).

Early childhood centres have been perceived to improve children's behaviour, where they offer a foundation for children before they progress to Grade R (Peisner-Feinberg, 2007). The literature is lacking in other factors that may lead to positive behaviour, which are not perceived by

practitioners, such as a child's dispositions and character (Bryson, Brewer, Sibieta & Butt 2016). So while there is a need understand these perceptions, it has to be established where the behaviour of children after they have come to early childhood centres, is also in tandem with the national policy framework that guides the centres.

While there is a growing need for early childhood centres (Colin, 2007), this is partly exacerbated by the need for parents to go to work (Skweyiya, 2008). Accordingly, practitioners see themselves as individuals who prepare children for the real world. According to Sheridan, Koziol, Clarke, Rispoli & Coutts (2014), the role of practitioners is evident in their key role in determining how much children learn and how prepared they are for entry into school. This importance is proportional to the literature which suggests that the critical role of early childhood centres plays out in the way that primary schools raise their expectations of early childhood centres (RimmKaufman, 2004).



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According to Li, Liu, Lv, Xu, Wang and Huntsinger (2015), practitioners need to have a positive attitude towards children, as a way of creating a secure and effective practitioner-child dyad for prospective positive interactions and social behaviours in children. Spilt *et al.* (2011) suggest that insecurity and less closeness may lead to a poor and conflicting practitioner-child relationship with more behaviour and social skills problems. On this basis, it is necessary to establish whether practitioners and practitioners interact with the children, and to what extent, to enable good relationships. As a result, practitioners view themselves as a strong link that leads to good behaviour by children among themselves and other people whom they interact with.

This need for communication is key to fostering the practitioners' role in engaging positive engagements between children and themselves. Where personnel at ECD centres approach each child on the basis of their disposition, the former would be able to have an impact. This impact is, however, dependent on the positive attitude that practitioners exhibit and present to children. It is safe to assert that this proximate relationship between practitioners and children creates a sense of security and trust on the part of the children. This is an indication that the degree of communication between children and practitioners depends on the temperament of the practitioner (WebsterStratton & Reid, 2010), and the practitioner's creation of a relationship is an indication of a positive attitude towards their role in early childhood centres (McCartney, 2007; Li *et al.*, 2015).

3.5 CONCLUSION

The present chapter has focused on early childhood development by reviewing literature on early childhood centres. It argues that a holistic approach that focuses on the role of practitioners in early childhood development is required. The chapter also evaluated the concept of behaviour in three areas by considering, firstly, the role of early childhood centres in shaping the behaviour of children; secondly, the characteristics and the behaviour of children in early childhood centres; and thirdly, the concept of behaviour with its focus on ECD centres.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a summary of the methodological process followed in the present study. Methodology is the process, framework and design used in an attempt to gain the knowledge required to answer the research questions raised in Chapter 1. It also describes the research approach utilised, the research design, research population and sampling, as well as the research setting. Furthermore, this chapter provides an overall view on the data collection and, finally, presents the data analysis procedures.

4.2. Research question

The main research question for this study is:

What role do practitioners in early childhood development (ECD) centres play regarding the behaviour of children?



4.3 Aim and objectives

4.3.1 Aim

The aim of the study was to explore the attitude and perceptions of practitioners of EDC centres regarding the behaviour of children.

4.3.2 Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study were to:

- explore the behaviour of children in ECD centres
- explore the attitude of practitioners in ECD centres regarding the behaviour of children

- explore the perceptions of practitioners in ECDCs regarding the behaviour of children.

4.4 Research approach and design

This research study applied a qualitative research methodology – an inquiry approach – in which the researcher collects information from the site where the study is conducted using more than one data collection technique, organising the data into relevant themes and analysing the data (Creswell,

2007). It follows the greater sense of humans understanding problems, by capturing participants' quotes and words rather than using numbers, as in quantitative approach (Krysiak & Finn, 2010).

Furthermore, this approach allows the researcher to investigate a profound understanding instead of examining external features of the subject matter (Long & Johnson, 2000). This study utilised an explorative and descriptive research design. An explorative research design was adopted to explore new points of view, or ideas, about a certain issue, which is unknown, or not much known about it, in order to formulate propositions (Burns & Grove, 2005). In addition, this design approach helps the researcher to create new knowledge on the research topic of interest (Babbie, 2013). It has been stated that 'this type of research design allows the researcher to develop interpretations from the views of participants, without having previous anticipations and obtain personal understanding of the researched problem' (Krysiak & Finn, 2010:309).

4.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.5.1 Research setting

'Research setting' refers to one or more particular settings where data for a study are collected

(Polit & Beck, 2010). This study was conducted in Athlone, a suburb of Cape Town in South Africa. Various ECDC centres form the setting for the study. The early childhood centres are divided in three types: family-based ECDC centres, community-based ECDC centres and public or private ECDs (Biersteker & Dawes, 2008) The study took place in three ECDs in Athlone which were chosen because they are a central location for the provision of early childhood programmes in Athlone.

4.5.2 Population and Sampling

Population is described as ‘the name for the large general group of many cases from which a researcher draws a sample and which is usually stated in theoretical terms’ (Neuman, 2000:516) and people with certain characteristics that are relevant to the research topic (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2010; De Vos, *et al.*, 2011; Burns & Groove, 2005). For the purpose of the present study, the population consists of parents, practitioners and principals of the ECD centres.

Sampling refers to a small group chosen from the larger population in order to give the study focus, as well as data collection being more easily achieved owing to the small sampling size (Rubin & Babbie, 2011). Participants were purposively selected as they were preferable for having a clear understanding of the research problem and phenomena (Creswell, 2007), and who are known to be a rich source of data (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; Burns & Groove, 2005) and embody the most typical attributes of the population (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport, 2011)

Three sets of participants were purposively selected for the present study and included 3 practitioners, 3 principals and 3 parents from 3 ECD centres, totalling 27 participants. The use of

purposive sampling allowed the researcher to make judgments in choosing participants to answer the research question, and thus meet the study objectives. Purposive sampling is trusted as a technique for expanding knowledge through purposely looking for participants who are known to be rich sources of data (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). These participants were selected on the basis of an exclusion/inclusion criteria. First, the participants had to be practitioners, either as practitioners or principals. Secondly, a further group of participants had to be parents, who had children at an early development centre. Thirdly, the children had to be attending the early childhood centres that formed the basis of the study. As such, it is on this basis that the three sets of participants, ie three practitioners, three principals and three parents from the three ECD centres, totalling 27 participants, were chosen.

The researcher obtained permission from the participants orally. This was followed by having the participants sign consent forms to signify that they had provide permission. The permission and the signing of the consent was done at two meetings. This is because there was no space to accommodate all the 27 participants at ago. Secondly, some of the participants, especially the parents were working at various places which required that they would be met individually and separately from others. In each of the meetings, an explanation of the research was offered to the participant, who would then offer their consent and signify it by signing the consent forms.

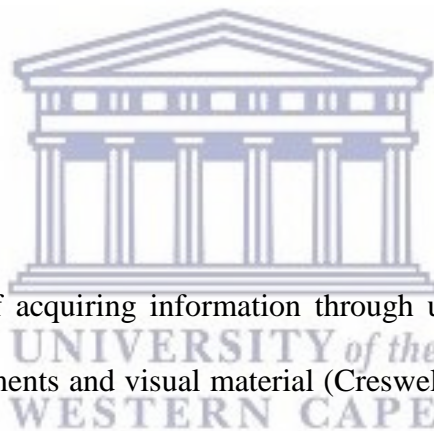
4.5.3 Pilot study

In this study, a pilot study was conducted in order to apply the interview schedule questions and to test their clarity. The pilot study is a primary evaluation of the interview schedule, which tests and confirms if the instrument functions precisely, by first investigating with a small group of

participants from the suggested target population (De Vos, *et al.*, 2011). The interview schedules were pre-tested with one practitioner, one parent, and one principal from the identified population. The pilot study was valuable because it helped the researcher to recognise unclear or uncertain matters in the interview schedule, and therefore improve it, so that those questions were clear for participants in the main study (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). At the end of the pilot study, the questions were modified and corrected for use in the main study, some being rephrased and others deleted as they had been answered within other questions. The interview skills of the researcher, such as probing and doing follow-ups on the topics of interest within the participants' answers, were also improved. These participants that was selected for the pilot study were excluded in the final data sets.

4.5.4 Data collection

Data collection is a process of acquiring information through unstructured or semi-structured interviews, observations, documents and visual material (Creswell, 2007). The collection of data for the present study was achieved through semi-structured interviews, observations and taking of fieldnotes. A semi-structured interview guide was use as the data collection instrument. Openended questions were used as these allow participants to elaborate on their experiences in detail (De Vos, *et al.*, 2011). Separate interview guides were developed for each group of participants (See Appendixes C, D and E). Practitioners and caregivers were each asked ten questions, and the principals and parents were each asked eight questions.



Data collection was conducted after the researcher had obtained permission from the Senate Research and Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape and the principals of the three ECD centres. Although all interviews were in English, the researcher had a translator for local language if this issue arose.

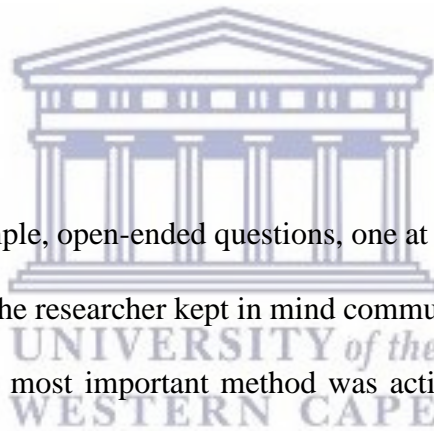
4.5.4.1 Preparation of participants

The researcher arranged meetings with practitioners, principals and parents in order to plan the way forward; this was done after obtaining permission from them. During the meetings with all participants, the study was explained and appropriate times and venues for conducting interviews was discussed. An additional meeting was organised with participants, where the study was fully explained, after which the researcher asked participants to participate in the study and informed them of their right to voluntary participation (Appendix A and Appendix B). All participants who agreed to participate in the study, signed consent forms.

The researcher selected parents whose children were attending ECD centres at the time of carrying out this research. They were contacted telephonically and via email a few days before the interview dates, when the researcher briefly explained the purpose of the study to them. Before the interviews were conducted, the study was additionally clarified in detail to all participants, who agreed to participate in the study. Parent participants' interviews were conducted at their own homes. Participants were assured of their confidentiality, anonymity and voluntary participation. The researcher also required permission from all participants to audio record the interviews, which all approved. Mutually convenient dates and times for interviews were agreed on by participants and the researcher beforehand.

4.5.4.2 Interview sessions

Hancock and Algozzine (2006) hold the view that interviews are instructive in explorative research as a way of achieving valuable information. The researcher used a quiet setting that was free from distraction and comfortable for participants. In addition, with permission of the participants, the interviews were audio recorded to avoid losing information. Some of the parents were interviewed at their respective homes, while the others were carried out at the early childhood centres where the practitioners were working. To ensure privacy, the researcher ensured that she engaged with the parent in a closed room away from any possible distractions by other individuals. To ensure saturation, the researcher engaged the parents through probing until the parents could not offer any new information.



The participants were asked simple, open-ended questions, one at a time, thus allowing them time to respond. During interviews, the researcher kept in mind communication techniques in order for the interview to be active. The most important method was active listening and ensuring brief verbal answers, thus avoiding interruption to participants' verbal flow. In addition, the researcher gave participants additional time to talk and tell their story. The interview schedule was arranged so that sensitive questions were not asked during interviews, to allow participants to be honest and confident. In addition, the researcher requested further information and clarity on points that appeared unclear. Moreover, all interviews were audio recorded, with the participants' consent. At the end of each interview session, the researcher directly downloaded the audio-recorded interview onto a computer, which was password protected, for privacy. Lastly, most interviews were concluded within the agreed reasonable times (45–60 minutes) and participants were asked whether there was anything else important that should be included.

For interview efficiency, three modes were used, namely field notes, audio recording and data saturation. Audio recording was used for its efficiency in collecting data verbatim for time management as it was not possible to remember every word that participants said (De Vos, *et al.*, 2011). Participants were interviewed until data saturation was reached, when no additional new information was forthcoming (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006), when participants start to repeat the same information and no new data related to the study or investigation arises (Saumure & Given, 2008), at which point the data collection process should be completed (Krysiak & Finn, 2010). Field notes, as an extra tool, were used to complement the inability of audio recording to copy non-verbal communication during interviews (Denzin, 2009). These notes were helpful in the course of analysis and interpretation of the data. Field notes were written down or transcribed on a regular basis, as soon as possible after observed phenomena occurred (McNabb, 2015:294). In instances where consent was required from children, it was obtained from either the parent or the guardian. Earlier research indicated that in instances of the need to obtain consent from the children, one had to obtain consent from either the parent or the guardian (Nelson, Skinner, Guarda, Choudhury, Sideris, Barnum & Bailey, 2012).

4.5.4.3 Observation

The main reason for using observational techniques is to check if what people say they do is what they actually do (Mulhall, 2003). In the present study, children were observed within ECDC centres and were divided into three groups in terms of their ages and classes. Each group was observed separately for one week. The key objective of the observation was to collect data about

the children's behaviour at the ECD centres to gain an understanding of how practitioners interacted with these children.

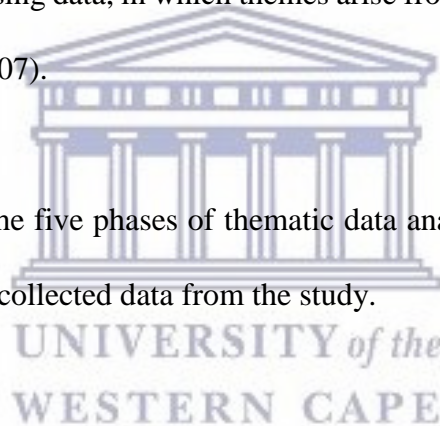
With the observation method, the researcher was able to see directly what happened in the ECDC centres instead of depending only on the participants' views (Fox, 1998). Observation was used to obtain a broader understanding and comprehensive analysis of the children's behaviour. Information obtained from these observations was recorded in field notes which were analysed and interpreted later. The researcher was observant during observation and while conducting interviews, in order to notice participants' reactions and responses. The researcher observed the demeanour of the participants in the course of answering the questions, their reaction to questions that were asked, and the moods they displayed in the course on answering the questions (Horowitz & Gerson, 2002). The purpose of of observing was to make sense of the answers and the observations that the researcher noticed (Reinharz, 2017). These noted points were documented directly during and after the sessions, to ensure that no important information was missing or omitted.

4.5.5 Data analysis

Data analysis means turning collected data into findings (De Vos, *et al.*, 2011) and consists of 'examining, categorizing, tabulating, testing, or otherwise recombining qualitative evidence to address the initial propositions of a study' (Yin, 2003:109). De Vos *et al.* (2011) describe data analysis as the process of bringing about order, structure and meaning to the biggest part of collected data.

In the present study, the researcher used the translator who was present at all the interviews to transcribe all individual interviews. The analysis of this research was guided by Creswell's (2007) thematic data analysis, a technique which is commonly used by taking steps that include recognising, examining and reporting patterns within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Creswell (2007) states that in order for the researcher to analyse qualitative data, there are strategies to be followed, which comprise preparing and organising the data; grouping related topics to form themes; and presenting the data in the form of tables or discussions. In addition, thematic analysis is an inductive method of analysing data, in which themes arise from the collected data and are not enforced into data (Dawson, 2007).

For the purpose of this study, the five phases of thematic data analysis as identified by Creswell (2009) were utilised to analyse collected data from the study.



Phase 1: Arranging and making data ready for analysis (transcribing data verbatim)

In this phase, the researcher managed the data in the form of organising, forming and establishing data files. The researcher revised transcribed data by listening to the audio recordings and checking for correctness. The researcher, with the aid of the transcriber, scanned through the transcriptions to identify the possible patterns and modes of dealing with it in the subsequent steps (Creswell, 2009).

Phase 2: Reading (exploring) transcribed data

In this phase, the researcher continued reading and re-reading text or data to gain a deeper understanding and gathering of relevant data by making notes and creating opening codes. The

transcribed data were skimmed through several times to clarify and understand it (Creswell, 2009), and then the researcher made notes and created opening codes. Lastly, the researcher clarified the initial notes that helped to collect relevant data together, guided by the initial codes.

Phase 3: Coding transcribed data

A code is a word or short expression that summarises the main attributes for a portion of qualitative data (Babbie, 2014). In this phase, the researcher made margin notes to allocate codes that describe the meaning of the segment (Clark & Creswell, 2015). The coding process produces themes and categories (Creswell, 2009). Finally, the researcher classified explained data received from the participants, by assembling groups of coded data, after generating the meaning from them.

Phase 4: Creating themes and descriptions

After initial codes were established, the researcher positioned these coded data together in the form of groups called themes. The researcher placed the participants' comments into chronological order of the codes that she had assigned them like P1, and P2. The data were interpreted to give meaning to the participants' experiences and to continuously filter themes to create clear meanings for each of them (Creswell, 2009).

Phase 5: Deducing the meaning of themes

After reducing the codes into themes (patterns) which were categorised into significant units, the researcher produced opinions from the findings of data that were generated in the study. Finally, the findings were sent to the participants for verification and confirming the correctness of the data (Creswell, 2009), thus supporting the research point of view so as to emphasise the data findings (Creswell, 2009).

4.5.6 Data verification and trustworthiness

Assessing the accuracy of qualitative findings is not easy. In qualitative research, researchers consider the principles of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability as trustworthy criteria to ensure the rigour of qualitative findings (Guba, 1981; Schwandt, Lincoln & Guba, 2007; Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2013). Polit and Beck (2010) describe trustworthiness as the researchers' self-confidence in their own data, and it is evaluated by the application of the principles of credibility, dependability, transferability and conformability (De Vos, *et al.*, 2011; Flick, 2009).

To verify data, the researcher had to apply these standards to assess the study's worthiness (De Vos, *et al.*, 2011; Flick, 2009; Given, 2008; Miles, *et al.*, 2013; Shenton, 2004). The present research was guided by the use of validations suggested by Shenton (2004), where the aim was achieved through two different processes. Firstly, the recording of interviews and the writing thereof into phrasing for analysis to occur. Secondly, the process of member checks where findings are offered to participants for validation and checking for correct interpretation of data in reporting. These activities enhanced the researcher's ability to deal constructively and objectively with issues of trustworthiness.

Credibility is the assurance that can be placed on the reality of the research findings (Macnee & McCabe, 2008), and was accomplished through the triangulation of different methods, prolonged engagement and peer debriefing (De Vos, *et al.*, 2011; Flick, 2009). Triangulation was applied by collecting data from different sources (practitioners, principals and parents) to produce rich,

credible data (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014). Triangulation, ‘the use of multiple and different methods, investigators, sources and theories to obtain corroborating evidence’ (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007:239) was obtained through different methods of collecting data such as interviews (with practitioners, principals and parents), observations (of children) and taking field notes. In addition, the researcher interviewed participants at different times and places, thereby, establishing similarity of the issue (Polit & Beck, 2014). Prolonged engagement is essential for increasing trust and building relationships with participants, as it allowed them to speak freely and be more open, as well as enabling them to provide accurate and rich information during interviews (Polit & Beck, 2010). The researcher spent one month observing the children’s behaviour and spent some time with staff (practitioners and principals) at the ECD centres, while collecting data; and later, during the data analysis process, asked them to explain and confirm collected data (De Vos *et al.*, 2011; Rubin & Babbie, 2011). Peer debriefing ‘provides inquirers with the opportunity to test their growing insights and to expose themselves to searching questions’ (Guba, 1981:85). The researcher applied peer debriefing by asking for assistance from the study supervisor by showing her the transcribed data. The researcher also used an independent coder to improve dependability. The independent coder looked at the data, its analysis and advised the researcher on the need for changes. The researcher used the same data collection tools for different participants (Shenton, 2004).

Conformability is the degree to which the results of the study are the product of the focus of the research, and not the researcher’s biases (Krefting, 1991). It refers to what extent the results of an investigation can be validated or supported by other researchers (Baxter & Eyles, 1997). Conformability is also essential to clarify the concept of reflexivity, which is the awareness of the

researcher's role in doing a research, and the procedure and consequences of research (Haynes, 2012). Reflexivity also has the ability to formulate an understanding of an individual's own cognitive world, especially the individual's influence as researcher and that of participants. The researcher applied this concept in order to appreciate that participants were the experts in the present research study; thus, their expertise would help to attain the goal of the study (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003).

4.6. Ethical considerations

4.6.1 Permission to conduct the study

Ethical clearance was obtained from the University of the Western Cape Senate Research Ethics Committee and from principals to allow the researcher to conduct the research at the respective schools. By explaining the intentions of the study (information sheet, Appendix A) to all participants; the researcher ensured that participants had full knowledge of what was expected of them so that their hopes were not raised unnecessarily. Participants had to sign a consent form after receiving information on the study aims and objectives (consent form, Appendix B). The researcher applied for permission for audio-recording of interviews via negotiation with participants.

4.6.2 Confidentiality and the right to anonymity

Participants were assured of confidentiality. The right to anonymity and confidentiality meant that participants' identities were protected while data shared during data collection would not be disclosed to reveal their true identity (De Vos, *et al.*, 2011). Although participants' consent to

participate in the study was sought, the intention was not to hold them captive. The researcher treated all information provided by participants sensitively and confidentially (De Vos, *et al.*, 2011). Information was kept securely in a computer with the researcher being the only one knowing the password. Participant identity was protected and the nature of their contribution; thus, their names were not included for any purpose in the research project. A code was used to differentiate the transcriptions of different participants. To ensure confidentiality of participants, interviews were copied to a computer immediately after the interview and then deleted from the audio recorder. Transcriptions were identified through codes and stored in a lockable filing cabinet, only accessible to the researcher.

4.6.3 Voluntary participation

Participants were informed that they had the right to end the research process at any time; given the sensitivity of topic and participants experiencing distress, provision must be made for debriefing. Participation was voluntary in that nobody was pressured into providing information. It was clear to participants that they could excuse themselves at any point during the study if they felt uncomfortable about continuing, without any fear or prejudice (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014; De Vos, *et al.*, 2011). Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time, without giving a reason and without fear of negative consequences or loss of any benefits.

The researcher debriefed the participants about possible effects of the study. She informed participants that professional counselling would be available to anyone who experienced any emotional discomfort during interviews or any time during the period of the study. The participants were informed that the social workers at government health centres would be available to offer counselling in the event that the research was traumatic to the participants. No harm or deceitful act was directed at participants in the course of the study.

4.7 Limitations of the study

Although the study was well structured and constructed, several limitations were identified that might have direct or indirect influences on the study outcome. The research was conducted in English and, as the researcher's mother tongue is not English, this could create a deficiency in interpretation of results. Owing to the researcher's limited knowledge of English, the use of a translator was inevitable and this person was therefore present during data collection. At the study sites the researcher made observations and took notes in Arabic and later, with assistance, transcribed the notes into English. The researcher used a translator who knew how to transcribe Arabic into English. This enabled the authenticity of the data to be preserved. The translator maintained confidentiality of the information.

As interviews and discussions were audio recorded, there was opportunity to listen at a later stage, where clarity was needed. The study was conducted in a small area of Cape Town, and therefore the findings cannot not be generalised to the rest of South Africa. The study may serve as a basis of understanding for similar circumstances.

4.8 Conclusion

The methodology applied in the research has been discussed in the present chapter. The research was conducted using a qualitative method, which was carried out through individual interviews, observations and taking of fieldnotes. Collected data were analysed using thematic data analysis as identified by Creswell (2009). Ethical policies were followed to ensure that participants were not subjected to harm.

Chapter 5 comprises the presentation and discussion of the research findings.



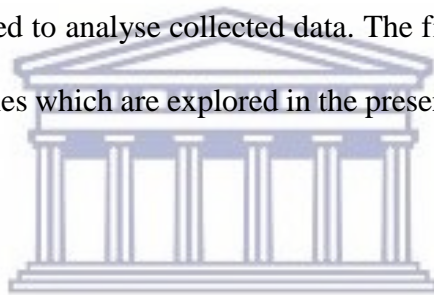
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CHAPTER 5

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of the study was to explore the attitudes and perceptions of practitioners in early childhood development centres (ECDCs) regarding the children's behaviour. A qualitative methodological approach was employed and data were collected through the use of semi-structured interviews, observations and fieldnotes. The researcher's motivation for using a qualitative research approach with an explorative and descriptive design was given in Chapter 4. Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis steps were used to analyse collected data. The findings are described according to different themes and subthemes which are explored in the present chapter, as well as the overall results and findings.



The aim of the study was guided by the following objectives:

- Explore the behaviour of children in early childhood development centres.
- Explore the attitudes of practitioners in ECDCs regarding the behaviour of children.
- Explore the perceptions of practitioners in early development centres regarding the behaviour of children.

5.2. Demographic data of participants

The participants involved principals, practitioners and parents. Some participants who were referred to as practitioners, performed the same role as practitioners. Consequently, the researcher

chose to collectively refer to practitioners and practitioners as practitioners and parents, and the total sample group consisted of 16 individuals from 3 different ECD centres. Firstly, the demographic data of the 16 participants are presented in Table 1 below, and are then discussed in the subsequent paragraphs. It should be noted that while the initial estimates for the sample were 27 participants, some of the participants did not turn up for the interviews. In addition, other potential participants did not fall into the categories that were required by the sampling procedure. In this case, they were neither practitioners, nor principals nor parents. This explains why the final number turned out to be at 16 participants.

Table 5.1: Demographic details of participants

Participant	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Language	Occupation	Years of experience
1	Female	60	Coloured	English	Principal	20
2	Female	65	Coloured	English	Principal	27
3	Female	40	Coloured	English	Parent	N/A
4	Female	58	Coloured	English	Principal	17
5	Female	40	Coloured	English	Parent	N/A
6	Female	42	Coloured	English	Parent	N/A
7	Female	43	Coloured	English	Parent	N/A
8	Female	45	Coloured	English	Practitioner	7
9	Female	60	Coloured	English	Practitioner	30
10	Female	70	Coloured	English	Practitioner	30
11	Female	62	Coloured	English	Practitioner	25
12	Female	55	Coloured	English	Parent	N/A
13	Female	60	Coloured	English	Parent	N/A
14	Female	65	Coloured	English	Practitioner	30
15	Female	30	Coloured	English	Practitioner	5
16	Female	40	Coloured	English	Practitioner	9

N/A = not applicable.

5.2.1 Age

The 16 study participants were between 25 and 75 years old. They presented a clear engagement of young, middle-aged and aged persons. All of them either worked at an ECD centre, or they had children attending an ECD centre.

5.2.2 Gender

All participants were women. No male participants were working at the centres as principals or practitioners. In addition, the researcher did not engage with any parents who were fathers to children at the ECD centres.

5.2.3 Ethnicity

All participants were of coloured ethnicity, probably because the area where the ECD centres were located is where predominantly coloured people reside.

5.2.4 Language

The language of communication at all the ECD centres was English. The author did not note the use of any other official language other than English. This was evidence that the children were taught or communicated with in English.

5.2.5 Occupation

Participants were either the principal, a practitioner or a parent. The three principals were at the top-level management position of the ECD centres, while practitioner were involved in the actual engagements with children. Parental occupation was not deemed to be relevant to the study because it did not inform the findings of the study.

5.2.6 Years of experience

The participants had various years of experience at ECD centres. The years of experience were divided into three phases: (1) three practitioners fell into the first category of 1-10 years; (2) two participants, a practitioner and a principal, had more than 10 years but less than 20 years experience; and (3) five participants, who included 1 principal and 4 practitioners, had 21-30 years' experience. This is an indication that, since the majority of participants had experience in ECD centres, their views indicated in the findings were from persons who had experience in this field.

5.3 Presentation of the findings

The results of the study are presented as they emerged from the analysed data of the transcribed, semi-structured interviews, observations and fieldnotes. Meaning was assigned to the data obtained through the researcher's interpretation of the data. The content of the quotations guided the researcher towards the results that arose from the data and established the credibility of the themes, by ensuring that the illustrative quotations reflect the participants' experiences, meanings and feelings (Creswell, 2009). Integration of literature and the application of the bio- ecological theory. was used to substantiate and strengthen the researcher's interpretations and analysis.

Table 5.2: Themes and sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes
Theme 1: Behaviour of children in early childhood centres	Sub-theme 1.1: An understanding of behaviour
	Sub-theme 1.2: Causes of particular behaviours in early childhood centres

<p>Theme 2: Practitioner’s perceptions of their role in early childhood centres</p>	
<p>Theme 3: Attitudes of parents and practitioners towards early childhood centres regarding child behaviour</p>	

The next section of this chapter discusses the various themes with their accompanying sub-themes, supported by direct quotations from participants. The identified themes, sub-themes and quotes from the interviews are compared and linked to existing literature and the theory applicable to this study.



5.3.1 Theme 1: Behaviour of children in early childhood centres

The first theme was based on the first objective of the study, and it sought to establish the role that practitioners in early childhood centres play in the behaviour of children. The findings from this study indicate that the children behaved in various different ways; this was evident in the interviews with practitioners and the researcher’s own observations in the course of collecting data from participants. At the core of this theme were indications by participants to give their views on what caused particular behaviour and how practitioners fitted into the bigger picture of dealing with the nature of the behaviour.

5.3.1.1 Sub-theme 1.1: An understanding of behaviour

Hornby (2000) refers to behaviour as an individual's ways of conducting themselves in society or towards other people. According to Verplanken et al., (2016), behaviour describes actions, and it can be observed and repeated. Degotardi and Davis (2008) indicate that it can be measured regarding its desirability in a given setting. The participants offered various definitions, which were instructive in understanding behaviour. One participant stated:

To me, behavior is how to relate to other people, vocally, physically. We educate it as a form of communication. Behaviour refers to a term that tells you certain things about a person, and not necessarily children only. (PR1).

This statement indicated that behaviour was not limited to the way that children presented themselves, but rather to the way that individuals presented themselves. Another participant defined it as:

... how children act towards other children. At times they are quiet, at times they bite or fight, at times they are aggressive. (PR2).

Some participants did not offer a definition, but implied a reaction that a child gives to an action that is less than what is required by the person who has given the action. One participant referred to behaviour as follows:

Let's say you give your daughter something, and she did not say thank you (PAR1).

Another participant referred to behaviour as the:

'manners of a child' (PRAC2).

While this answer did not qualify the behaviour as good or bad, other participants qualified what bad behaviour is. They stated that:

If she did not say thank you mummy, so this is another behaviour too. It is bad behaviour. (PAR 2).

The participant tried to qualify what good behaviour was, and stated that:

The child need to understand to say thank you [and] ... to greet. (PAR 2).

One participant summed up behaviour as the entire way that a child presents themselves. She stated:

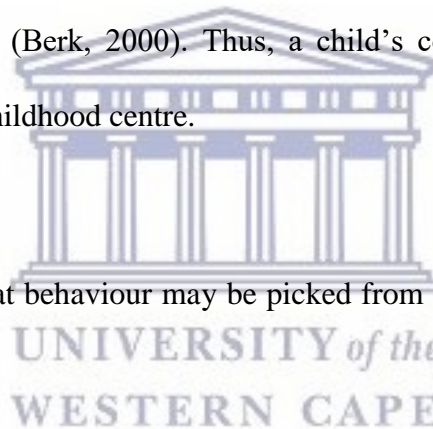
It is the action the child through whatever he or she is doing. (PAR 3).

This view reflects that children behave in a particular way in a given environment, as shown by their silence, or angry acts such as engaging in fights and biting others. The pivotal point is the role that an early childhood centre would play in ensuring that the behaviour displayed by a child, over time, was desirable behaviour (Allen, Kelly & National Research Council, 2015). Yoleri (2016) indicates that it is not only practitioners or practitioners who play a role in moulding children's behaviour; it is also pertinent that children, as individuals with their own temperaments and dispositions, are also engaged in this process (Yoleri, 2016). This fact is an indication that, while children who came to ECDCs had different dispositions, the centres played a role in shaping their behaviour from a negative to a positive stance, which demonstrates the influence of early childhood centres on child behaviour.

Another participant described behavior as:

... the manner of the child and how he is brought up. (PRAC2).

This view shows that behaviour relates to how children behave, how they are influenced by home environment, and how early childhood centres play a role in ensuring that children are understood, and their behaviour is depicted as desirable (Verplanken, et al., 2016). These definitions point to the requirement by early childhood centers that a child behaves or is taught to behave in a particular way (Allen, *et al.*, 2015). In addition, the participants show that a child has to be understood, and the basis for aiding the change is behaviour. The ecological theory uses the concept of person to illustrate the issue of a child and their surroundings from immediate family to school. While a child is at the centre of their particular ecological system, numerous settings inside their immediate and subsequent surroundings influence their behaviour and the ability of the environment to forge their values, beliefs and behaviours (Berk, 2000). Thus, a child's core environment includes their family, followed by the early childhood centre.



Participants also established that behaviour may be picked from older persons, and it affects the child. She stated:

Child behavior comes from the older person. If you are a nasty person, the child will pick up from you and the child will act like you. If you side the with the thing, the child will follow your foot steps. (PRAC2).

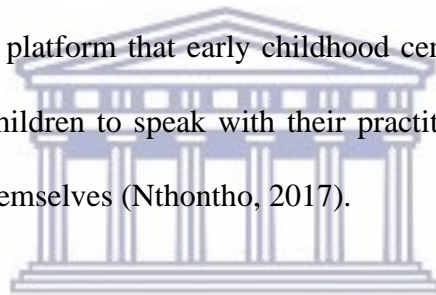
The ability of children to pick up wrong behaviour from parents indicates the relevance of the theoretical framework; this is a depiction of the microsystem, where children's surroundings influence their dispositions and behaviour towards other fellow-children (Bronfenbrenner, 1982).

It appears that while lack of good behaviour arises from lack of direction by caregivers, good behaviour arises from giving proper direction to children, and the latter's willingness to adapt to the practitioners' ways of teaching while at early childhood centres. This is an issue where parents

did not engage with their children. Another participant stated:

Some children are very poor and many of their mothers are young and are involved in drugs. These poor children have no direction. I think the direction is only at school, where they are loved, they talk, they pray. (PRAC1).

This explanation from a participant tends to indicate instances where there is lack of direction from members of the microsystem. Children's measure of second resort is the meso-system, where early childhood centres are theoretically situated. This is an indication that the meso-system plays a big role in forging the behaviour of children (Beaty, 2010). In this regard, early childhood centres play a role in understanding the behaviour of children (Paris, 2008, Allen, *et al.*, 2015). Research suggests that this is due to the platform that early childhood centres offer, to listen to children (Paris, 2008), which enables children to speak with their practitioners because they have been offered a platform to express themselves (Nthontho, 2017).



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5.3.1.2 Sub-theme 1.2: Causes of particular behaviour in children

This sub-theme has as its focus the identification of the causes of particular behaviour in children. This identification was based on the exploration of the attitudes and perceptions of practitioners. The causes were indicated through the behaviour that children presented with at early childhood centres.

The dispositions of some children were seen from the way they behaved. Some children were violent at school, while others were calm. With regard to explaining children's violent behaviour, participants stated:

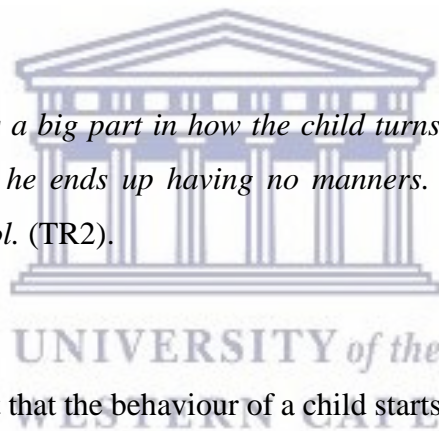
Yes, there is good behaviour with some of the children. If the parents expect good behaviour from home, the child would do what they see. (TR6).

This was an indication that the behaviour that children displayed at early childhood centres was a result of what they experienced at home. The participant pointed to the fact that a child's behaviour was an extension of what happened at home. This was echoed by another participant who stated that:

The child's behaviour comes from the older persons in a family. If the older person is going to be nasty, the child will pick that up and act like you. (TR4).

Another participant stated that:

The family plays a big part in how the child turns out. If the family does little to guide the child, he ends up having no manners. These are seen in the way he behaves at school. (TR2).



This statement points to the fact that the behaviour of a child starts at home and extends to school. Regarding calm behaviour, participants clearly indicated that it was also a result of how they saw older persons treat each other. One participant stated:

The child learn from what they see. If they see their parent treat their mother well, he treats the females at school well. (TR4).

These views show that the behaviour of children correlated with the behaviour in their parents' homes. This view is in line with Villa, Thousand and Nevin's (2008) findings which indicate that the behaviour of children is affected by the presenting behaviour of parents. Consequently,

ongoing **parental** presence and behaviour at home, in pro-social activities, has been taken to be instructive in forging children's dispositions in other environments such as school (Majdandžić, Lazarus, Oort, van der Sluis, Dodd, Morris & Bögels, 2017). In addition, some participants refer to the character or disposition of a child as the cause of their behaviour. One stated:

Sometimes in school, you find some children, alone, grumpy, they do not like groups and do not communicate. (PAR1).

Another participant was of the view that the neighbourhood of children influences their behaviour:

But sometimes the children do not behave well because they see what [the big people] do. (PAR2).

However, some participants also referred to the fact that children's behaviour may be affected by what happens at early development centres. One stated:

You may teach the child what to do while at home but in the creche the child learns how to behave. (PAR3).

This was qualified by the practitioner who offered a view on how much a child's behaviour is affected by home environment and school environment. She stated that:

I would say 90 percent of behaviour should come from home, while 10 percent comes from the early childhood centre. (PR1).

These views represent two major aspects. Firstly, the child's family that formed the microsystem that guided their behaviour, which was depicted by the way they behaved at early childhood centres. Jaffee, Hanscombe, Haworth, Davis and Plomin (2012) state that chaotic home lives are associated with behaviour problems in children, whereby their experiences of chaos at home determines behaviour that manifests at school. Jaffee, *et al.* (2012) add that these problems are

evident in the ways that children conduct themselves, or hyperactivity at school. Secondly, that early childhood centres also shape good behaviour and bad behaviour in children. Although the present study does not show any correlation between chaotic families and the behaviour of children, the results on the causes of particular behaviour in children show that family dynamics affect the behaviour of children. This was noted by a participant:

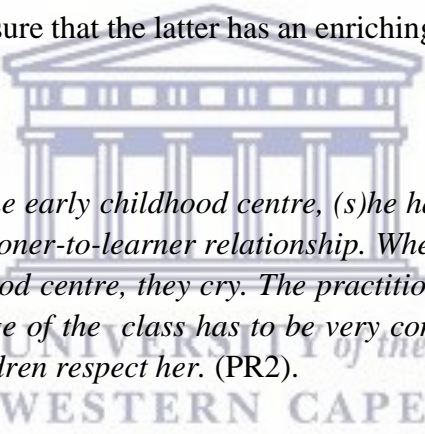
The child's behaviour comes from the older persons in a family. If the older person is going to be nasty, the child will pick that up and act like you. (TR4).

This is evident in the findings of Ferguson, Cassells, MacAllister and Evans (2013), who are of the opinion that the effects of children's physical environment such as chaos in the family and neighbourhoods, affects their cognitive development and subsequent behaviour.

In addition, these findings resonate with the ecological theory. The theory places the child as the subject of a study in the family and shows its effect on their next surrounding. Thus, the microsystem is engaged as far as the family is seen as a point of effect on the development of the child (Berk, 2000). This contextualisation of the effects of the microsystem as a family on the behaviour of the child in the meso-system indicates the behaviour that the child portrays in early childhood centres (Garrity & Canavan, 2017). Consequently, the relationship between child and parent in the microsystem and its subsequent effect on the child's behaviour in an early development centre as the meso-system, reiterates that the microsystem offers a pattern of activities to a developing child that illuminate their behaviour at an early childhood centre (Berk, 2000), which indicates that the family plays a big role in the type of behaviour that a child presents

at an early childhood centre. In addition, the major cause of particular behaviours by children is due to what happens at home and the natural dispositions of the child.

There is an interplay of forces between the meso-system and microsystem, which guide the practitioner's understanding of the various behaviours depicted by children. This was evident in the views from some participants who stated that the family and the child's disposition affect behaviour, whereas other participants stated that early childhood centres also play a role that culminates in either largely good behaviour to a greater extent, and bad behaviour to a smaller extent. Participants stated that a practitioner attempts to understand a child to be able to communicate adequately and ensure that the latter has an enriching atmosphere at early childhood centres. One participant stated:



When a child comes to the early childhood centre, (s)he has to be understood with the aid of a close practitioner-to-learner relationship. Where they have necessarily been to the early childhood centre, they cry. The practitioner or facilitator or the educator who is in charge of the class has to be very committed to ensuring that she respects and the children respect her. (PR2).

Another participant stated:

We set rules for the children, like do not do that, and they do it after I turn my back. I just call the principal to speak to them, and once she does this, the children do not do it again. (PRAC 2).

Thus, nurturing relationships, and setting rules and enforcing them, involves issues of behavioural problems among children.

5.3.2 Theme 2: Practitioners' perceptions of their role in early childhood centres

The second theme relates to the perceptions of practitioners about their role in early childhood centres. The findings from this study indicate that the participants had different ways in which they regarded or understood the role of practitioners in early childhood centres.

How participants perceived the role of practitioners in early childhood centres was in line with the view that their role filled gaps that parents could not fill and, as a result, their role in early childhood centres was instructive. Against this background, some participants perceived the centres as an important step in the development of the children's education system.

One participant stated:

I think the early development centre is important for children because it is their basic step to entering school. That is why some children make it in big schools and others seem to struggle... and other children make fun of them. (TR 2).

These things are important to start from the bottom. The grassroot of the learning ship for at least 14 years. (TR 2).

According to Colin (2007), there has been a gradually increasing need for child care services in several industrial countries. The need for parents and caregivers to go to work, and be sure that the children are safe in an early childhood centre highlights the importance of these centres (Skweyiya, 2008).

Another perception is that practitioners help children to learn, at their varying mental abilities and speeds. One participant stated:

I think the early development centre is important for children because they need to come and learn. (PRT 1).

Another participant agreed with this:

Yes to the ant-slowness – abilities, so that they can learn. (PRT 2).

Sheridan (2009) affirms that early childhood centres play a key role in determining how much a child learns and how prepared the latter is for entry into school. It is on this basis that RimmKaufman (2004) opined that primary schools have high expectations of the effect of early childhood centres on children. It is the researcher's opinion that practitioners in early childhood centres perceive their role as a mode of helping children to seamlessly fit into the school system by enrolling in early childhood centres at an early age.

Parents also had various views about the role that practitioners play in the behaviour of children in early childhood centres. Participants said:

It is important because your child has to learn in the end of the day, your child need education at the end of the day, so when your child goes to school he or she will be ready for whatever activity and work they give there. (PRT1).

But in the creche, they going to learn, not science or physics but how they should act, behaving well, making friends, learning social life and how to treat well. So the practitioners are important. (PRT2).

These parents showed how they perceived practitioners as key players in moulding the behaviour of children. In addition, this role offered a strong foundation for primary education, which is in line with Ogunyemi and Ragpot (2015) who hold the view that the

activities which children engage in, while they comprise mostly play, form a big role in their future education. The latter authors propose that what takes place at early childhood centres influences the curriculum of children, when they enter school in subsequent years.

Although Ogunyemi and Ragpot's (2015) research is based on a constructionist theory concerning the need to have a fusion of play and learning, it is nevertheless on a par with the present research insofar as it indicates the importance of the role that practitioners play in education modeling in early childhood centres. Kweyiya (2006) maintains that nowadays more young children attend child care centres, which many families rely on for providing an education in the early stage of childhood.

The ecological theory places the early childhood centre at the centre of a child's life, outside of home. It forms part of the macro-system, which offers a pattern of activities to developing children, in light of their face setting with practitioners at early childhood centres (Berk, 2000). The early childhood centre also depicts itself as the meso-system which interacts with the the microsystem, influencing the developing child (Dawes & Donald, 2000). The perception that the early childhood centre is important creates a linkage between parents who bring their child to the centre and practitioners who engage with the child at the centre. This interaction in a continuum presents the application of the theory.

As a result of these perceptions on the role of practitioners in the behaviour of children in early childhood centres, the participants identified various benefits that arose from practitioners'

engagements with children. These benefits ranged from foundational perspectives to improving the children's behaviour. One participant stated:

I think is important because I think it is the foundation of the child here. Here you will teach them about what is right from wrong. I think it is a very important foundation and also I think the child should be in the creche before early at school. (PR2).

This view is in line with the literature which suggests that early childhood education is related to a more positive behaviour by children (Peisner-Feinberg, 2007) and is an indication that the early childhood programme offered a good foundation to behavioural correlations in children. This was reinforced by another participant, who stated:

To some extent, yes. I always say that whether the child is one year old or from birth, or an adult, he has to be shaped at home. I would say 90% of the behavior should come from home and 10% from the creche. (PR1).

This observation is consistent with the findings of Bryson, Brewer, Sibieta and Butt (2016) who state that early child education practices start at home, and can subsequently take many forms across various contexts, depending on the age of the children. This finding was echoed by Marais and Meier (2010) who were of the view that early childhood centres prepare learners to go to school readily and display better behaviour. This finding was held by a participant who stated:

Very much so. ... I do not think the child that is at home would do what the child at the ECDC centre because we deal with thought development. (PR3).

The above is an indication that practitioners perceive that early childhood centres have a key role to play in moulding the behaviour of children (Nel, Joubert & Hartell, 2017; Aguirre & Maria, 2011).

5.3.3: Theme 3: Attitudes of parents and practitioners towards early childhood centres regarding child behaviour

The findings from the present study indicate that practitioners' attitudes towards their roles were instructive in establishing how the relationships in early childhood centres worked between the three key players – parents, practitioners and children.

Most of the practitioners and practitioners had positive attitudes towards their role in engaging with children. One practitioner stated:



We interact with the children like they are our own children. In this way, we are able to have a good relationship. (TR3).

As a result of practitioners treating children as though they were their own, they are able to develop good relationships with them. Hughes and Kwok (2007) are of the view that where a practitioner is perceptive their relationship with a child, it has a positive effect on the child's behaviour, which is in line with the assertion that a secure and effective practitioner-child dyad predicts positive interactions and social behaviours in children; while insecurity, less closeness and a more conflicting practitioner-child relationship leads to poor social skills and more behaviour problems (Li, Liu, Lv, Xu, Wang & Huntsinger, 2015).

Furthermore, another participant stated:

You treat them like they are your own children, because you stay longer with them than their parents. Where they call you mummy and daddy, you love them. You cannot discriminate against them. (PRAC1).

Because of the positive attributes of the roles of practitioners in early childhood centres, they were comfortable with creating relationships that would create bonds with the children, which was an indication that they have positive attitudes towards their roles in early childhood centres by virtue of their relationship with the children.

Another participant stated:

When a child comes to the ECD, [s]he needs to be understood, with a close practitioner-learner relationship. (PR1).

This statement indicates that practitioners played a role in understanding children and their differences and thus made an impact (Robarts, 2014). It is safe to assert that this proximate relationship between practitioner and child is a result of the former's role; it creates a sense of security and trust on the child's part (Mathaba, 2015), which reinforces positive attitudes. This dynamic is indicated by the observations that the researcher made of children who were close to their practitioners and how they freely spoke to them, which also shows that the degree of communication between child and practitioner depends on the temperament of the practitioner to a great extent as well as the child's. Yoleri's (2016) study of the temperaments of children in teaching and behavioural changes indicates that the practitioner's own temperament is key to a child's responses.

The above findings indicate that the existence of a sense of security between practitioner and child is instructive in building positive interactions in children, and is evident in some of the observations

that the researcher identified in the course of collecting data. Firstly, some children were brought to early childhood centres when they were still sleeping (OBS1). When they woke up, they did not show fear about the absence of their parents. They were calm about being in the early childhood centre, with their practitioners (OBS1). It was observed that most children listened attentively to their practitioners, and they did not exhibit any kind of fear of their practitioner (OBS2). Secondly, it was observed that when it was time for a break and the practitioner gave children fruit to eat, they would thank her. It was visibly evident that they were close to their practitioners (OBS2).

Therefore, the positive findings, coupled with the children's dispositions towards the practitioners as they performed their roles, indicated that there was a close proximate relationship in the level of communication between child and practitioner. According to Webster-Stratton and Reid (2010), children in early childhood centres engage with practitioners and subsequently learn the ways of forming their positive social interactions. Accordingly, the attitudes of practitioners are instructive in guiding their actions towards the behaviour that children present. This is an indication that the attitudes of practitioners towards their role and how they present their roles, are pivotal in the learning of children. According to McCartney (2007), one way of assessing child-care quality is to observe behaviours that reflect positive interactions between children and educators on the one hand, and between children and their peers on the other hand. Li *et al.* (2015) have stated that where the relationship between young children and their practitioners is close and affectionate, it yields positive behaviours.

In view of the above attitudes, this study found that the attitudes of the practitioners towards their roles created close relationships between them and the children. These roles effectively created a platform for a relationship between practitioners and children. From a theoretical perspective, the attitude of practitioners towards their role guides the relationship that they build with children.

Firstly, at its core, this relationship shows an interplay of the microsystem, where a child comes to an early childhood centre with their domestic dispositions. Secondly, the practitioner, as a person from the meso-system, embraces the child with all their dispositions and, with the right attitude, exercises the role that makes the child a better person (Adamsons, O'Brien & Pasley, 2007).

The parents also have various attitudes towards the role of practitioners in early childhood centres.

One parent stated that the early childhood centre was vital because:

I do have trust in the practitioners. (PRT 1).

The ECDC is important because the children need to come and learn. (PRT 1).

This trust was based on the positive role that practitioners exhibited. As a result, the positive attitude towards this role aids the learning of the child (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). For some parents, their attitudes towards these roles were informed by earlier relationships that they had had with the persons running the early childhood centres. One parent stated:

I trust the practitioner to look after my child because I know the principle, we go to church together and we used to have woman meetings together. (PRT 2).

She hastened to add that:

The ECDC is important because it helps children with slow learning abilities to learn. (PRT2).

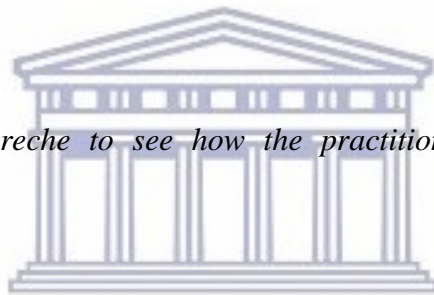
This was corroborated by another parent who said:

I trust practitioners with my child because they have an effect on the behaviour.
(PAR1).

These positive attitudes indicate that practitioners' roles in early childhood centres assisted the development of children's mental and behavioural faculties. With regard to interactions, the research did not agree with Palmer (2016) and Pape (2015), who referred to the view that interactions between parents and practitioners start from the first day that children attend early childhood centres.

Another parent stated:

I used to go to the creche to see how the practitioner handles children. I was impressed. (PRT 2).



This positive attitude had the effect of engaging both parents and practitioners as a way of having a middle ground that guided decisions about the children's well-being; this was, however, pivotal only where practitioners adopted the role of nurturing relationships with children and enforcing discipline. In this regard, it was established that practitioners took on the disciplinary role when they contacted parents when there was a behavioural problem. One participant stated:

We definitely call the parents. We also cannot tolerate children with bad behaviour. So the parents will come in and we shall tell the parents the way they handle the children. (TR3).

These statements from parents agree with literature that indicates that early childhood centres positively affects children in developing cognitive skills (Piesner-Feinberg, 2007); this is in line

with Burchinal and Nelson's (2000) assertion that families may at times choose the type and quality of care, especially where they have a previous relationship with the persons who run early childcare centres. This attitude to the type and quality of care is shaped by the expected effects of the role that practitioners play (da Figueiredo & Dias, 2012), which is in line with the theoretical underpinning that shows that, within the microsystem, the child is in a space that has other key players, such as the family and schoolpractitioners, who guide the child's behaviour (Adamsons, O'Brien & Pasley, 2007). It also shows that parents' positive attitudes help practitioners to place children in an area that promotes their development while they work. In so doing, practitioners can balance the work environment as a macro-system, with the child's meso-system at school (Berk, 2000).



5.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the findings of the data which were thematically analysed. Three themes were identified and discussed: the behaviour of children at early childhood centres; the perceptions of practitioners regarding early childhood centres; and the attitudes of practitioners to early childhood centres. The chapter answered the study's research question by establishing that the attitudes and perceptions of practitioners and principals at early childhood centres inform the behaviour of children in the long term.

The next chapter provides the conclusion and recommendations regarding the present study.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of the study was to explore the attitudes and perceptions of early childhood centres regarding child behaviour. In engaging this aim, the study employed a qualitative methodological approach. Chapter 5 presented and discussed the research findings, which answered the research question of: What role do practitioners in ECDCs play regarding the behaviour of children?

The study's objectives were to:

- explore the behaviour of children in ECDCs
- explore the attitudes of practitioners in ECDCs regarding the behaviour of children
- explore the perceptions of practitioners in early development centres regarding the behaviour of children.

These objectives were executed in achieving the aim of the study and answering the research question.

Data collected from participants were analysed, and they highlighted three main themes as discussed in the previous chapter. These were engaged with available literature as a way of elucidating, exploring and gaining further insights from the research findings. In the present chapter, a brief summary of each of the previous chapters, as well as conclusions and recommendations from the findings, are presented.

6.2 Summary of the study

The summary presents a brief account of each chapter.

6.2.1. Chapter 1: Introduction to the study

Chapter One introduced the study and provided an overview of the full thesis, describing the aim and objectives, stating the problem and providing the background and rationale to ECDCs' role in shaping the behaviour of children. The chapter briefly introduced the theory which underpins the study, the literature context, the research methods applied, and ended with the significance of the study. The chapter offered an insight into the research methodology used in the study, as well as the significance of the study, and defined key terms, along with an outline of the study.

6.2.2. Chapter 2: Theoretical framework

The second chapter presented the theoretical framework and an outline of the bio-ecological systems theory, which guided the study.

6.2.3. Chapter 3: Literature review

The third chapter reviewed available literature on the topic. It set out the relevancy of early childhood development, the perceptions and attitudes of parents and practitioners, as well as practitioners' behavioural concerns regarding the shaping of children's behaviour.

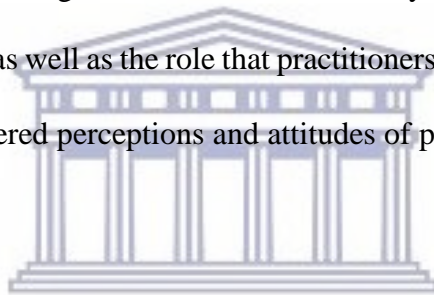
6.2.4. Chapter 4: Research methodology

Chapter Four gave an overview of the research methodology, which consists of the design of the study alongside the data collection procedures, sampling, rigour and trustworthiness of the execution of the research, feedback on the pilot study, procedures of the main study, and the data

analyses that were used. The researcher ensured that her perceptions and biases about children, practitioners and early childhood centres did not affect the study. This chapter also detailed ethical considerations for the study; these included requiring that participants offer informed consent to take part in interviews, and that the researcher maintained anonymity and confidentiality for all participants.

6.2.5. Chapter 5: Presentation and discussion of findings

Chapter Five presented the results of the study, through the themes that emerged from the analysed data. It illuminated the understanding of child behaviour in early childhood centres regarding the causes of particular behaviours as well as the role that practitioners play in upholding or improving these behaviours. It also considered perceptions and attitudes of parents and practitioners at these centres.



6.2.5.1 Theme 1: Behaviour of children in early childhood centres

The findings from this study indicated that the behaviour that children displayed at early childhood centres can be related to the behaviour of their parents at home as well as what they experienced at home. As a result, the child's family was the microsystem that informed their behaviour as depicted in their behaviour at early childhood centres. The bio-ecological theory was relevant insofar as it placed the child in a family (their microsystem) and showed the effect of the child's immediate surroundings. This depiction reiterated that the microsystem offers a pattern of activities to a developing child which are displayed in their behaviour at an early childhood centre. Furthermore, the theme also showed that practitioners played a key role in shaping the behaviour

of children. They offered directions in their meso-system space, which was lacking in the microsystem. Therefore, the meso-system played a large role in shaping child behaviour.

6.2.5.2 Theme 2: Practitioners' perceptions of their role in early childhood centres

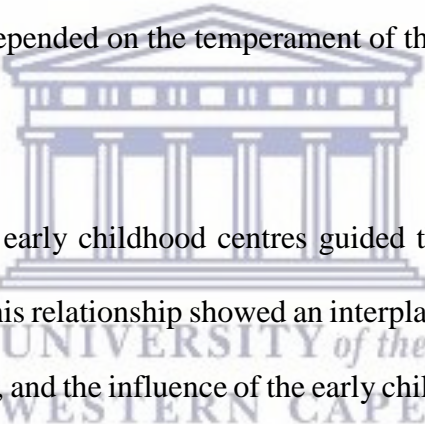
The findings indicated that there was a need was perceived for early childhood centres as a basis for primary education. The activities that children engaged in, played a key role in their future education. It was clear that what took place at early childhood centres could be used to develop child curricula of children, when they entered school in subsequent years.

It was further shown that the bio-ecological theory placed early childhood centres at the core of a child's life, outside their home, as a microsystem, which offered various activities to developing children, in conjunction with practitioners. In addition, early childhood centres also depicted themselves as a meso-system that interacted with the microsystem and influenced developing children. The perception that early childhood centres were important, created a linkage between parents who bring their child to such centres and the practitioners who engage with children at the centres. It was also established that the early childhood programme offered a good foundation to behavioural contexts for children.

6.2.5.3 Theme 3: Attitudes of parents and practitioners towards early childhood centres regarding child behaviour

The findings from this study indicated that the attitudes of parents and practitioners were instructive in establishing how the dynamics of early childhood centres functioned between the three key players: parents, practitioners and children. Practitioners had positive attitudes towards early childhood centres, owing to the fact that they developed relationships with the children, as a

way of creating strong bonds between practitioners and children. This was in line with the assertion that a secure and effective practitioner-child dyad predicts positive interactions and social behaviours in children; whilst insecurity, less closeness and more conflicting practitioner-child relationships predict poor social skills and more behaviour problems. These positive attitudes informed the approach that practitioners used towards children. They approached each child with concern for their inherent dispositions, as a way of creating a good impression on the child. As a result, this led to proximate relationships between practitioners and children, which in turn created a sense of security and trust on the part of the children. The researcher's observations indicated that practitioners were very close to the children. It was also clear that the degree of communication between child and practitioner depended on the temperament of the practitioner.



The attitudes of practitioners to early childhood centres guided their relationship with children. From a theoretical perspective, this relationship showed an interplay of the microsystem, regarding the family that a child came from, and the influence of the early childhood centre as a meso-system, on the child. Therefore, practitioners, as part of the meso-system, who embraced a child with the right attitude, regardless of their dispositions, guided the child towards being a better person.

All parents trusted the practitioners at early childhood centres. The positive attitudes of parents showed that early childhood centres aided the mental and behavioural faculties of the children. These findings illustrate the theoretical position that, within the microsystem, the child is in a space that has other key players such as family and school practitioners who inform the child's behaviour.

In addition, it shows that the parents' positive attitudes help them to place the children in a place which enables their development, while they are at work. As a result, parents are in a position to balance the work environment as a macro-system, with the child's microsystem at home, as well as with the meso-system at school.

6.2.7 Chapter 6: Conclusion and recommendations

This part of the study provides a conclusion and the recommendations. It gives a general summary of the chapters comprising the study and the limitations that require concurrent consideration as a mode of evaluating the study.

With regard to the limitations, the researcher was limited by the limited understanding of English as the medium of communication. This was limited to the extent to which the translator would be able to articulate the issues that informed the research. researcher was able to or indirect influences on the study outcome. The study was limited to a pulation that uses two hospitals or community health centres. As such, the researcher could not generalise the findings to the entire South African population.

6.3 Recommendations

The recommendations for further research are as follows:

- Further research should be done in Western Cape Province on a wider scale to establish the attitudes and perceptions of practitioners at early childhood centres about various contexts such as ethnicity, social classes, socio-economic status and geographical settings.

- Further research on early childhood centres should be done to ensure that the personnel gain a better understanding of children and their behaviour. This will help to inform government on the need for reform in some of its policies regarding children in early childhood centres.
- Research should be done on how a child's dispositions are formed within various family styles to ensure that children incline to desirable behaviour.
- Research also needs to be done to establish how children's temperaments affect erstwhile good relationships between children and practitioners in the course of moulding child behaviour.

6.5 Conclusion

The study focused on the attitudes and perceptions of practitioners in ECDCs regarding the behaviour of children. The study findings indicate that the behaviour that children displayed at the early childhood centres was a result of what they experienced at home. The attitudes of parents and practitioners were instructive in establishing how the dynamics of early childhood centres worked between the three key players of parents, practitioners and children. The bio-ecological systems theory was a theoretical framework, which gave good scope for engaging with children in a school setting and how various sites such as home and parental workplace affected child behaviour and dispositions at an early development centre.

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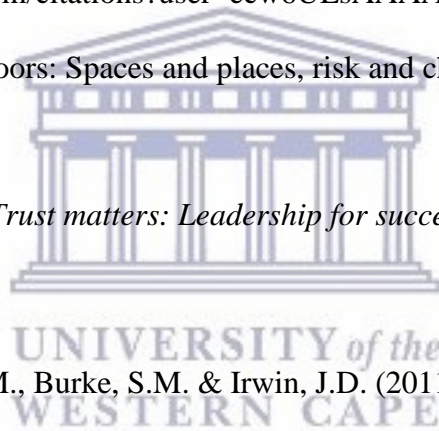
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INFORMATION SHEET



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Project Title: Early Childhood Development Centres' role in shaping behaviour of children

What is this study about?

This is a research project conducted by Sabra Hussein Shertiel at the University of the Western Cape. I am inviting you to participate in this research project because you have expertise and experience in the field. The purpose of this research project is to find out how the role of Early Childhood Development Centres influences the behaviours of children.

What will I be asked to do if I agree to participate?

You will be asked to fill in the agreement form for the interview. Digital recorded will be used during conducting the individual interview. You will asked be to respond to the interview questions in the way you understand them. The study will be conducted in a suburb in Cape Town focusing on the behaviour of children in Early Childhood Development Centres'. The interview will take about 30 to 60 minutes. The university day care centre will be used as study site. The questions for the interview are exploring the relationship of parents and practitioners interactions with the children and how do their attachment get affected.

Would my participation in this study be kept confidential?

The researcher undertakes to protect your identity and the nature of your contribution. To ensure your anonymity, thus your name will not be included for any purpose in this research project. A code will be used to differentiate different transcriptions of participants. Only the researcher will be able to link your identity and will have access to the identification key especially for the information verification. To ensure your confidentiality, the interviews will be copied to a computer immediately afterwards and deleted from the audiotape. The interviews will be kept in the password protected folder which will be known to the researcher only. The transcriptions will be identified with codes and stored in the lockable filing cabinet, personal to the researcher. If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the highest.

What are the risks of this research?

There may be some risks from participating in this research study. The risks may include the psychological, social, emotional, and legal risks. There might also be the risks that are currently unforeseeable as: all human interactions and talking about self or others carry some amount of risks. We will nevertheless minimise such risks and act promptly to assist you if you experience any discomfort, psychological or otherwise during the process of your participation in this study. Where necessary, an appropriate referral will be made to a suitable professional for further assistance or intervention.



What are the benefits of this research?

This research is not designed to help you personally, but the results may help the investigator learn more about children's behaviours and make better ways of dealing with the children who show problematic behaviour in their Early Childhood Development Centres. This will consequently improve how other Early Childhood Development Centres might do things differently to increase well rounded responsible focused children. We hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through improved understanding of child-parent-practitioner interactions.

Do I have to be in this research and may I stop participating at any time?

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.

Is any assistance available if I am negatively affected by participating in this study?

All possible precautions will be taken to protect you from experiencing any harm from the research process. If however, you are or feel that you are being negatively affected by this research suitable assistance will be sought for you at University of the Western Cape.

What if I have questions?

This research is being conducted by Sabra Hussein Shertiel in the Social Work Department at the University of the Western Cape. If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact +00277829471188: and Email: 3575962@myuwc.ac.za. Should you have any questions regarding this study and your rights as a research participant or if you wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact:

Head of Department:

Prof. C Schenck Dept
of Social Work

cschenck@uwc.ac.za

021 9592277



UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE

Dean of the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences:

Prof José Frantz

University of the Western Cape

Private Bag X17Bellville 7535 chs-deansoffice@uwc.ac.za

This research has been approved by the University of the Western Cape's Senate Research Committee and Ethics Committee.

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM



UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

Tel: +27 21-959 2459, Fax: 27 21-959 3686

E-mail: cjerasmus@uwc.ac.za / 3575962@myuwc.ac.za

Title of Research Project: Early Childhood Development Centres' role in shaping behaviour of children.

The study has been described to me in language that I understand. My questions about the study have been answered. I understand what my participation will involve and I agree to participate of my own choice and free will. I understand that my identity will not be disclosed to anyone. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without fear of negative consequences or loss of benefits.



Participant's name.....

Participant's signature.....

Date.....

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PRACTITIONER



UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

Tel: +27 21-959 2459, Fax: 27 21-959 3686

E-mail: cjerasmus@uwc.ac.za /3575962@myuwc.ac.za

General information for all participants about the study

Date of the interview

___ / ___ / ___ Date / Month / Year

Location: _____

Participant code: _____

Interview questions

1. Please tell me about your roles at ECDC centre you are involved in?
2. Do you know what the behavior is? Describe the behavior in your own understanding?
3. What are the factors influencing the children's behavior at ECDC center?
4. What challenges do you face in dealing with children's behaviour?
5. Please talk to me about your relationship with the children?
6. How do you handle misbehavior in the classroom?
7. What do you feel are the major concerns you face with these children as result of their behaviour?
8. Do you think that ECDC centre is important for children and why?
9. What is your role as the practitioners at ECDC centre in the development of children's behaviour?

10. Do you have any other information that you would like to share that was not mentioned during this interview?

Thank you for taking time to participate in this interview.



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APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PARENT



UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

Tel: +27 21-959 2459, Fax: 27 21-959 3686

E-mail: cjerasmus@uwc.ac.za /3575962@myuwc.ac.za

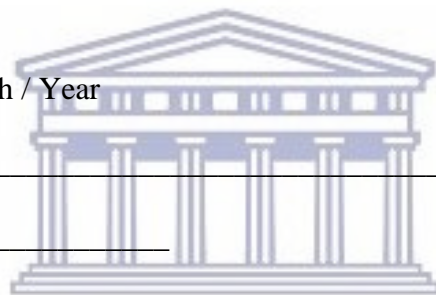
General information for all participants about the study

Date of the interview

____ / ____ / ____ Date / Month / Year

Location: _____

Participant code: _____



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WESTERN CAPE

Interview questions

1. What is your understanding of behaviour? Describe it in your own understanding?
2. Do you have trust on the practitioners in dealing with your child?
3. Do you think ECDC center is important for your child and why?
4. Is there any change in your child's behaviour after entering ECDC center? Explain and give an example?
5. Is the ECDC centre impact on your child's behavior and how?
6. How do you see the role of the ECDC centre in changing your child's behaviour?
7. How do you deal with your child's misbehavior?

8. Do you have any other information that you would like to share that was not mentioned during this interview?

Thank you for taking time to participate in this interview.



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WESTERN CAPE

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PRINCIPAL



UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

Tel: +27 21-959 2459, Fax: 27 21-959 3686

E-mail: cjerasmus@uwc.ac.za / 3575962@myuwc.ac.za

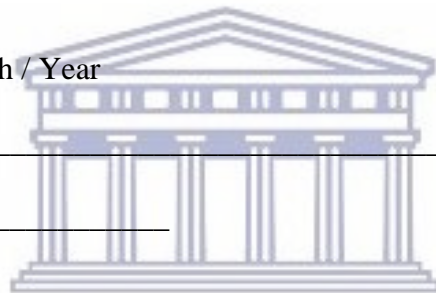
General information for all participants about the study

Date of the interview

____ / ____ / ____ Date / Month / Year

Location: _____

Participant code: _____



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WESTERN CAPE

Interview questions

1. Do you know what behaviour is? Describe behaviour in your own understanding? How do you relate it to ECDC center?
2. How do you employ the new practitioner?
3. Does the role of ECDC center influence on shaping the behavior of children and how?
4. Do you think that ECDC centre is important for children and why?
5. Do you offer programmes in your ECDC center for improving the children's behavior?
6. How do you handle children that experience behavioural problems?
7. What is your role as the principal of ECDC centre in the development of children's behaviour?

8. Do you have any other information that you would like to share that was not mentioned during this interview?

Thank you for taking time to participate in this interview.



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WESTERN CAPE

APPENDIX E
ETHICS LETTER



OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR: RESEARCH
RESEARCH AND INNOVATION DIVISION

Private Bag X17, Bellville 7535
South Africa
T: +27 21 959 2988/2948
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20 February 2017

Ms SH Shertiel
Social Work
Faculty of Community and Health Sciences

Ethics Reference Number: HS/16/77

Project Title: Practitioners in early childhood development centres' role in shaping behavior of children.

Approval Period: 17 February 2017 – 17 February 2018

I hereby certify that the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape approved the methodology and ethics of the above mentioned research project.

Any amendments, extension or other modifications to the protocol must be submitted to the Ethics Committee for approval. Please remember to submit a progress report in good time for annual renewal.

The Committee must be informed of any serious adverse event and/or termination of the study.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Josias', is written over a faint, large watermark of a sunflower in the background.

Ms Patricia Josias
Research Ethics Committee Officer
University of the Western Cape

PROVISIONAL REC NUMBER - 130416-049

APPENDIX F
Letter from editor

33 Bloekom Avenue
Calitzdorp
6660
21 April 2018

Ms Sabrah Shertiel
Department of Social Work
Faculty of Community and Health Sciences
University of the Western Cape
Bellville

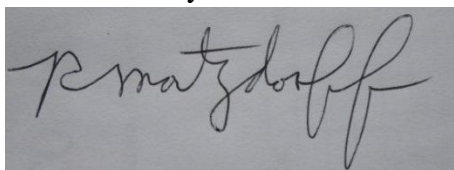
Dear Ms Shertiel

Thesis entitled: The role of practitioners at early childhood development centres in shaping the behaviour of children

I declare that I have read and edited the above document from the standpoint of grammar, syntax, idiom and punctuation according to the norms of English in the style followed in South Africa, and the style and format generally used in academic and scientific publications.

I have worked for many years, and continue to work, as a sub-editor, copy editor and proofreader for the publishing division of the SA Medical Association on all their journals, which embrace general medicine, bioethics, psychiatry, surgery, radiology etc. I'm technically retired now, but continue working for them on a freelance basis, and also undertake editing for under- and postgraduate students.

Yours sincerely

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in black ink. The signature is cursive and appears to read 'R Matzdorff'.

Robert Matzdorff mobile
084 582 0460