Challenges of Parenting Children in Environments of High Crime: A Case Study of Mbare Community

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ABSTRACT

This research was set up to examine the process of rearing children in high crime environment. The study aimed at looking at the behavioural patterns of parenting children in high crime environment, determining the challenges of parenting children in high crime environment in Mbare, establishing the physiological impact of parenting children in high crime environment in Mbare as well as identifying social support systems that can be put in place in order to protect children against high crimes. The Self-Determination Theory, Relatedness Support and attachment theory was used as the theoretical foundation of parenting style in high crime setting. This study was a quantitative study. The use of case study followed since it enables a lot more conclusive research since data collection is rather easy. The cases sought in this study were based on the residents in Matapi Flats in the community of Mbare and its stakeholders and those of the ZRP and education leaders. The size of the sample taken was 40 participants sampled in the population of Matapi flats in Mbare residents. In the study, the researcher used judgmental or purposive sampling method. The research paper has considered that parental style is a major determinant in the creation of both externalizing and internalizing behavioral tendencies among children. Authoritative parenting style that integrates the psychological well-being leads to negative influence in the process of becoming a criminal. Children also need to be taught to act right and they need independence in order to develop a sense of right decisions and this is a trait of being authoritative parent.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the research is to view on the obstacles of rearing children in high crime surroundings. Since the past thirty years, Zimbabwe economic landscape has always shifted to downwards negative index (WHO, 2020). This comes with a big span of economic crisis and this has a number of implications to the livelihoods of the community and overall living situation and this led to a number of cases of criminal activities when taking care of children in high crime communities in the nation. The pushy factors such as, poverty, climate change, corruption, social inequality and poor governance are attributed as criminal behaviours. This chapter cast a glance on the study by considering background of the study, statement of the problem, research objectives and research questions, research purpose, research assumptions, significance of the study, the delimitations and limitations of the study and definition of terms.

The economical nature of Zimbabwe has been marked with a negative trend that has witnessed the decline in the national domestic growth both in its per capita form as well as in the composite gross domestic product. This can be explained by the many factors which include devastating climate, mismanagement of resources, sanctions imposed to the country, change of climatic conditions amongst many other factors (Nsingo, 2020). All these contribute to a larger part in the rising number of crimes recorded in the country per year. There will be high cases in Zimbabwe as crime is becoming one of the adaptive behavior of the majority of poor people to survive. Overall, it has been seen that recently the population of children whose parents are in prison has been on the rise in most developed and developing nations. As a result, the case of children of imprisoned parents has drawn utmost interest among the researchers, criminologists, psychologists and community workers (Transparency International, 2021). This is due to the fact that the rising prison population has resulted in the rising numbers of children who are living in the areas of high crime too. In other international conventions such as UNICEF, there has been a lot of discussion of the rights and protection of children by different players and some have been able to formulate global strategies on how each child`s right is upheld (UNICEF, 2014).

Soares, (2019) suggests that inequalities in terms of increase in income level are associated with the positive growth of crime. This is blamed on the enhanced concentration of the people in the hands of the few and the few becomes the easily accessible places of the poor of society. Conversely, Beck (2017), too have conjured that the decline in opportunities in the society is directly proportional to the rise in the rate of crime in the contemporary society. The social decline and the overall increase in poverty since the past three decades have put Zimbabwe down the economic crisis because due to the poorly paid salaries, financial crisis and social inequality, poor governance and the escalation of the unemployment rates, the government compromised greatly on the social deliveries provided to the citizens. These economic situations are essentially the social engineers of worsening the living conditions and the overall quality of life of the Zimbabweans which have had culminated high crime index in the land (Nsingo, 2020). One of the push factors that negatively impacted the lives of people, particularly the low high-density suburb like Mbare in the country, is the increasing poor economic situation prevailing in the country.

The imbalance of power involving the state, criminal gangs and society in South Africa has been brought about by the poor parenting of children due to the historical events that led to the political consequences. With the overcrowding and the absence of residence and facilities in Cape Flats, the demand in job and house created a place to covert crime gangs as the source of money and protection (Lambrechts, 2022). Child crimes or behaviour is one of the emerging issues in Pakistan and also in the whole world. Saleem (2021) states that in high crime areas, when young adults (youths) are locked up in custody, most of these people are overdetained because of robberies and stealing mobile phones among other petty crimes. The tribal clashes, murder, rape, sodomy are also common crimes by the youths in the rural areas of Sindh. Depending on the violent and lawless crimes committed such as rape, murder, property crimes amongst others, most of the crimes committed by children involve male.

Parents have a very essential role of influencing and shaping the behavior of teeners. In this respect, Coste (2015) acknowledges the contribution of a clinical and developmental psychologist known as Baumrind who also interested herself in the problem of parenting styles. Baumrind classified three styles of parenting founded on parental demandingness and responsiveness as these were authoritative parenting style, authoritarian parenting style and permissive parenting style. There is a direct connection between juvenile delinquency and the type of behavior of parents that they take to treat their children (Coste, 2018). It is however noted by et.al (2009), that the parents of young people are increasingly being held responsible of the criminal or delinquent behavior exhibited by their young ones. Even some of the courts punish the parents because of the thoughtless or antisocial behavior of children.

In Zimbabwe and more so in the high density residential areas in Mbare, the number of children who have parents incarcerated has been on the rise. The main reason why it is so is due to it being a village with people who are in the state of abject poverty living there. The trend that Tyners (2015) have observed is that the population of the prisoners is increasing by the day in high density suburbs like Mbare suburbs through prisonization. Indeed, according to the Daily News of 20 June 2024, 87 out of 100 zombie women in confinement, and 65 of every 100 zombie men can brag about the fact that their children are in high crime areas. In line with the above the Herald of September 2024 also estimates that approximately 5 percent of children below age 18 in Mbare suburbs respectively has a parent in jail. The prison system in the world has posed a challenge of severing of family bonds between parents and children. These kids are likely to have experienced some emotional issues such as depression, low self-esteem, bedwetting, nightmares, shaming, anxieties and attachments problems (Murray and Farrington, 2024).

Consistent with the above, the children of living in high crime environment can be said to have become victims of circumstances in a society where there are poor social service institutions and in the urban centres there are poor family institutions of vulnerable children which exposes children to increased levels of social, economic and psychological vulnerability (Nsingo, 2010). Moreover, not much literature is available regarding the psychological impact of parenting children in high crime environment in Zimbabwe. The literature that has been written about the topic is mostly founded in cases given in the developed countries that outline a vast magnitude of the psychological implications on the children of prisoners. The study in this regard would provide integrated conceptual and empirical research on psychological impacts of parental involvement of safe environment to wellbeing of children. The study also aims to raise the issue of the safety of children to prevent the cycle of

helplessness that can become fatal in these societies since the role of parental advisory cannot be undermined in the upbringing process of any child.

Statement to the Problem

In the Zimbabwean urban communities, poor parenting practices are witnessed in areas of high crimes that affect the social development of children. Parents assume that they are raising their kids with good behaviour yet what they notice is a reverse of their expectations. The environment of high crimes is causing conflicts between the children and parents since they are socialized to have conflicts. The impact of the high crime environment on the community is high and this motivated the researcher to evaluate the research that had inspired them about the challenges of raising children in high crime environments with reference to Mbare community.

Research Objectives

The study was guided by the following research objectives.

1. To examine behavioural trends of parenting children in high crime environment.
2. To identify the challenges of parenting children in high crime environment in Mbare.
3. To determine the physiological effect of parenting children in high crime environment in Mbare.
4. To identify social support systems measures that can be made available to safeguard children from high crimes.

Review of Related Literature

As stated by Beson (2020) in the Creswell (2009) literature review is a thorough and organized evaluation of the available research studies and academic articles to one particular research question. This chapter examined behavioural patterns of parenting children in high crime environment, the issues of parenting children in high crime environment, physiological impact of parenting children in high crime as well as the social support systems that can be provided in a bid to protect children in high crime.

Conceptualizing Parenting

Parenting plays a very important role in the physical, psychological and behavioural growth of the child. Parents are very crucial in the life of their children. Masud (2018), a clinical psychologist says that three courses are essential in parenting. To start with, care shields children against harm. Care also involves the enhancement of emotional and physical health. Secondly, there is control in the meaning of creating and applying limits to achieve the safety of the children and others as an ever-expanded sphere of action. Thirdly, development is the task of realizing the potentials of children and deriving benefit of utilising it to the maximum. Parenting comes into play when it comes to physical and human growth of children in family life and health care education.

Parenting is raising children by the parents. Among the definitions of parenting is the fact that it combines the process of encouraging and advocating the physical, emotional, social and intellectual growth of a child throughout their stage as an infant to the stage of adulthood (Scott, 2019). According to Campbell (2017), parenting is an upbringing of children and all the obligations and actions that accompany it. According to Britannica (2019), parenting is all about bringing up their children, protecting and taking care of them so that their children grow up normally to become adults. According to Collins (2017), parenting can be seen as the process of bringing up children and all that comes with this process. The parenting patterns in the world share three key objectives in agreement with American Psychological Association (2021). The first reason is the maintenance of health and safety among children; the second is the preparation of children to become productive adults and last is cultural transmission.

According to Scoop (2021), it is shown that parenting is vital in raising children and developing character and breeding values in the children as the process of parenting goes on. The building of strong family, strong society and nation state is also essential. Parenting plays some very crucial roles as explained below. According to York (2018), the parents act as the initial teacher to a child and the school teachers came in later. The parents are the

ones who shape up the character of a child and instill values to the child. The child is deemed as an entity whom the parents can mould into what they desire them to be. Responsible children and youth can help in the development of a good society. The children that are raised now are the youth and the future parents of the new generation. It is a disciplined and well-organized society which can be constructed out of parents who raise their children in a proper way and then these people can contribute to the building of good society.

Parenting matters to enable children to become future responsible citizen. They are not only supposed to develop character but also teach manners, morals and other values that are essential to sound citizenship. Hazel (2019) supposes that reduction of crime and antisocial activity in the society depends on good parenting. This is where parents come in and encourage education among the kids which can later facilitate them to secure a job either in the government sector or even in the private sector. This minimizes crime in the society. Good parenting imparts good manners into the kids. The parents are said to be the teachers of a child. Hence, we can hardly do without parenting in order to instill character in our kids and teach them right manners. Creating obedient students is among the key goals of parenting in the present globalized world. They are supposed to be responsible in the classroom and respect teachers and carry along with other peers. Parenting may be a good tool to raise responsible young people who will bring about a country building effectively.

The manner in which parents address their children and how they model their children influences the life and lifestyles of children greatly. It is the duty and responsibility of parents not to evade their roles of grooming the child. Part of the principles include taking time off to spend with the children, engaging yourself in the grooming procedure of the children and to have the rules set and be accommodative and flexible (Moyana, 2019). Parents must be available to spare some time with the children as one of the key values of proper parenting. They should be aware of their issues, they should spend some time with them and take them on trips so that they can be stress free. Parents are to take part in grooming of their children. They must bring up their childhood and befriend, philosophize and mentor later on when they are adults. Values need to be instilled and conditions to be fixed by the parents. These rules should not be too strict but should be made more flexible so as to take care of the complaints by children. They should not only be permitted to play, sing and enjoy their hobbies (Simon, 2020).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework of parenting style in a high crime environment was guided by the Self-Determination Theory, Relatedness Support and attachment theory.

Self-Determination Theory

The theoretical framework of the research study was Self-Determination Theory, which pays attention to human motivation and socialization (Deci and Ryan, 2017). The foundations of the theory lie on the rationale of initiation and controlling of human behavior. Self-Determination Theory, is an apt framework that provides human motivation in relation with the processes of socialization. Education the people that they should not commit crimes because this is contrary to the moral foundations of the community, is applicable to the present study. This theory is based on some experiments conducted by Ryan and Deci (2017) who investigated how externally provided rewards impact an individual intrinsic motivation. According to Ryan and Deci(2017), intrinsic motivation is more superior to extrinsic rewards. The key theoretical assumption that renders Self-Determination Theory of parenting style in a high crime environment suitable in the assessment of this study is the argument that social environments of human beings influence individual attitudes, values, motivations, and behavioral patterns.

Relatedness Support Theory

The factor relatedness support refers to the support offered by parents, which is full of love, care, and a sincere willingness to assist the child (Cordeiro et al., 2018). Positive behaviors are reinforced which results in internalization of positive responses despite the children being placed in stressful environments (Assor et al., 2018). Insistence on the socially acceptable practices means that children internalize the aspects of the socially acceptable practices on their own. Supportive parents who communicate regularly with their children always manage to develop rapport that will lead to security and readiness of children to turn to their parents whenever

they are in distress (Soenens et al., 2017). The ability to be comfortable in the family can enable the children to seek their parents before they resort to antisocial behavior. The parenting style in high crime environment can pass the relatedness support theory and could adapt well on socially adequate behaviors when a parent enacts autonomy-suppressive behavior on adopted children (Assor et al., 2017).

Attachment Theory

According to the attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969), the quality of relationship between the infant and caregiver determines the future relationships between the infant. Early events of the right attachment between a parent and a child are transferable to the late stages of the life of a child (Raby and Dozier, 2019). The burden of the attachment theory on the parenting style in the setting of high crime is that secure attachment enhances the survival probability of an individual (Green, 2018). The likelihood of inappropriate attachment is higher in adoptive families that may result in a lack of family cohesion and satisfaction (Wydra and O'Brien, 2018). Lack of secure attachment in the childhood stage also causes the attachment relationships to be disorganized and individuals fail to self-regulate instances of their interaction with or among peers (Capaldo, 2018). Attachment has an effect on controlling emotions in a child. Regulation theory is founded on the ability of emotion regulation that enables an individual to be empathetic towards someone and limit his or her negative emotions (Schore and Schore, 2008).
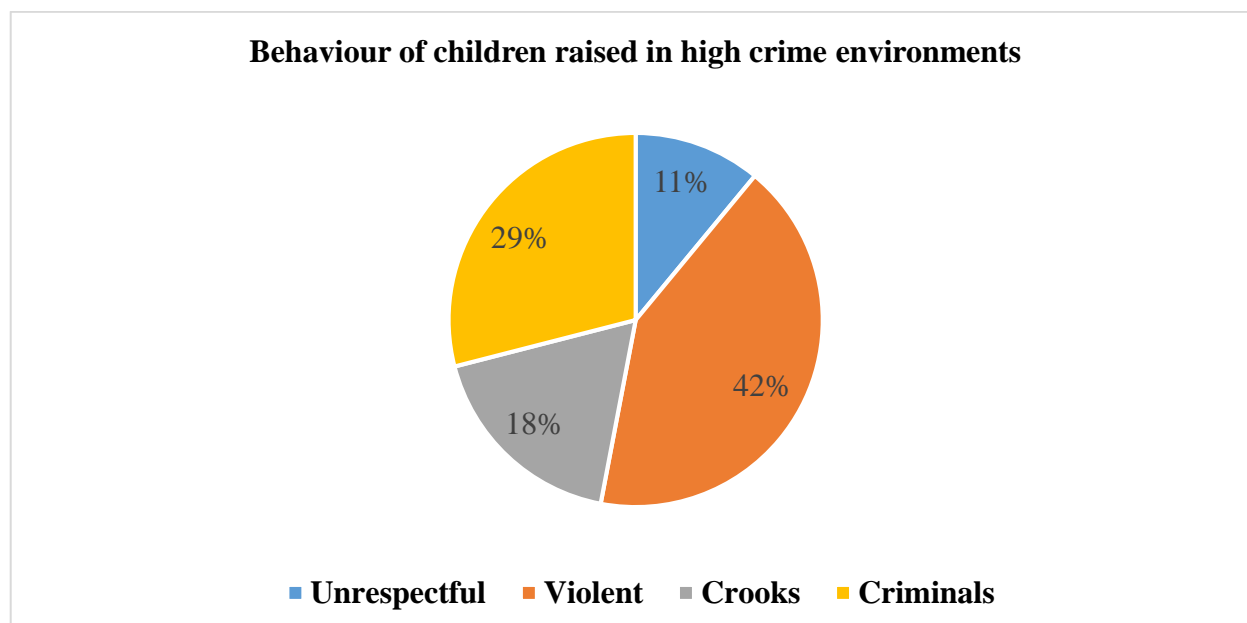
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Cases study has been employed by the researcher. Case studies can be prospective (whereby criteria are set and cases matching the criteria are brought on as they become available) or retrospective (where the criteria are set on how to select cases based on past records so that they can be brought on to the study). Several sources of evidence are used in the research of case studies, and case studies are strong on the preformation of the theoretic propositions. In this study the sampler relied on the judgmental or purposive sampling method as the population was selected among people who stay in the Matapi Flats, residents in the Mbare community, and the stakeholders, and the leaders in the zrp as well as the education in this study.

FINDINGS

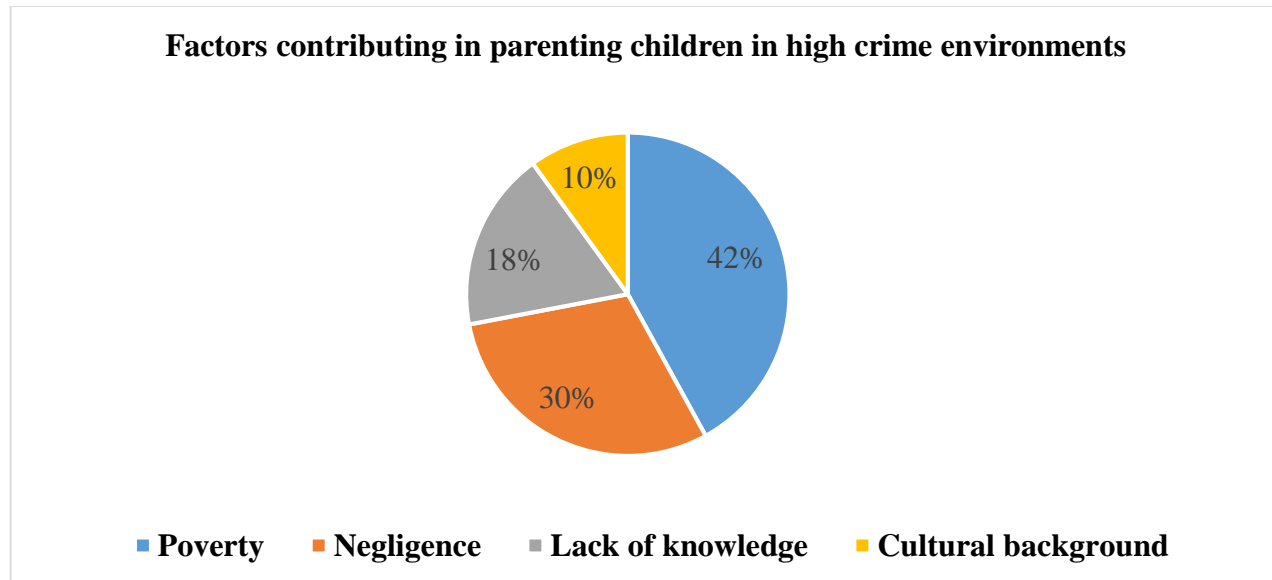## Challenges of Parenting Children in Environments of High Crime

The study was sort to find out the behavior of children raised in high crime environment and the findings are shown in figure 1.1 below.

Figure 1.1 Behaviour of children raised in high crime environment

Behaviour of children raised in high crime environments

11% — Unrespectful
42% — Violent
18% — Crooks
29% — Criminals

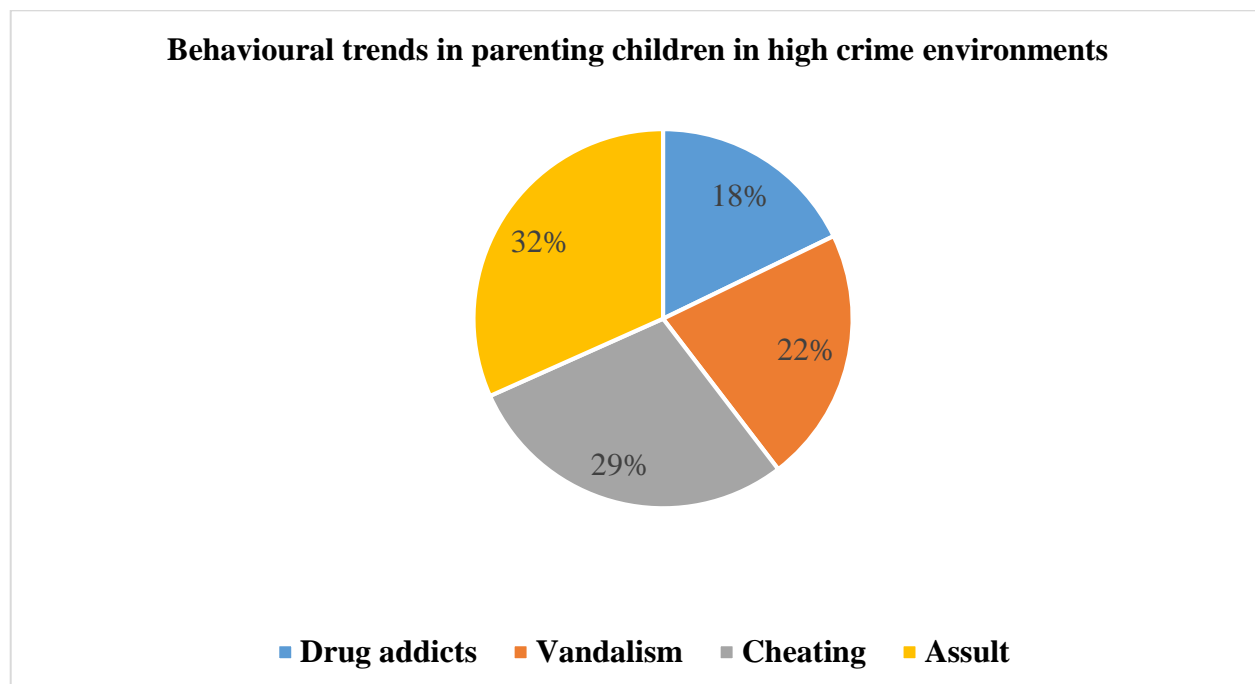■ **Unrespectful** ■ **Violent** ▪ **Crooks** ■ **Criminals**

As shown in figure 1.1 above most of the subjects 42 percent said that violent behaviour is linked in the children brought up in high crime areas, 29 percent said criminal behaviour, 18 percent said the children are crooks and 11 percent said that the children are unrespectful. The second question was sort to identify the factors that lead into parenting children through high crime environments.

Figure 1.2 Factors that contribute in parenting children in high crime environment

Factors contributing in parenting children in high crime environments
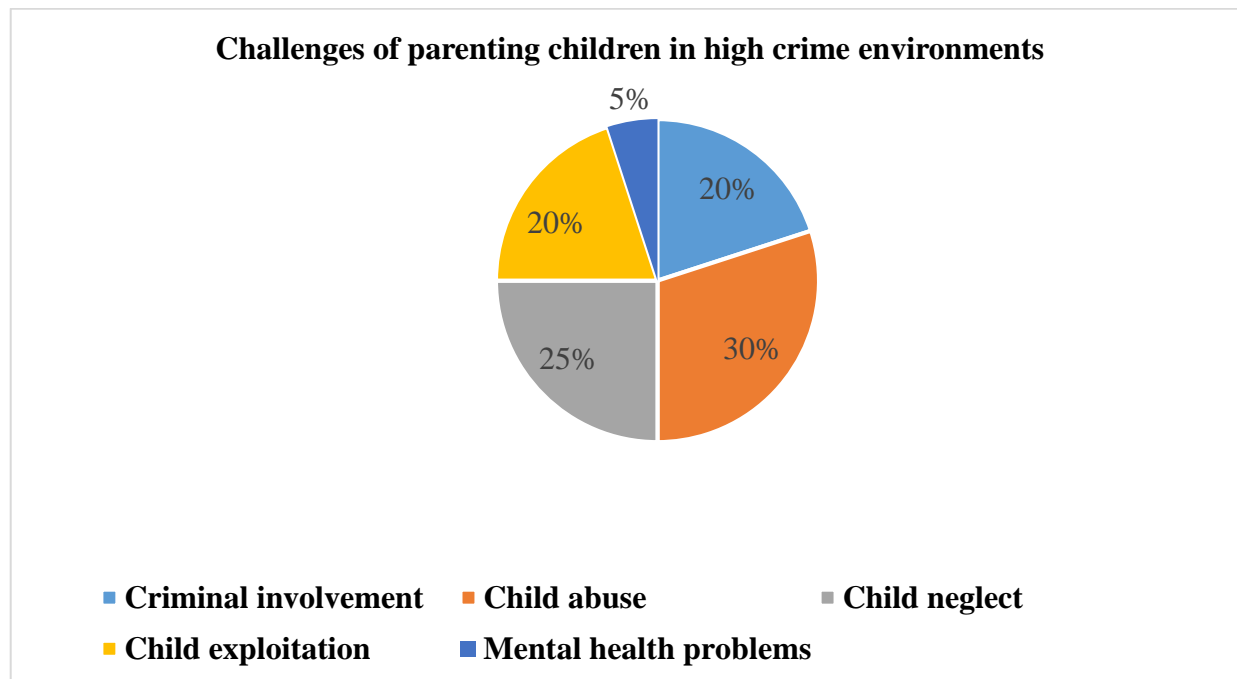
When asked n the factors that contribute in parenting on high crime environments made up the majorities 42% in as a cause of poverty 30% of citing negligence 18% citing the lack of knowledge and the remaining 10% of pointing cultural origin as the cause of parenting on high crime environments. The next question was about the spotting of what is the effect of parenting behaviour to a child in dangerous environment.

Figure 1.3 Behavioural trends of parenting children in high crime environment

Behavioural trends in parenting children in high crime environments
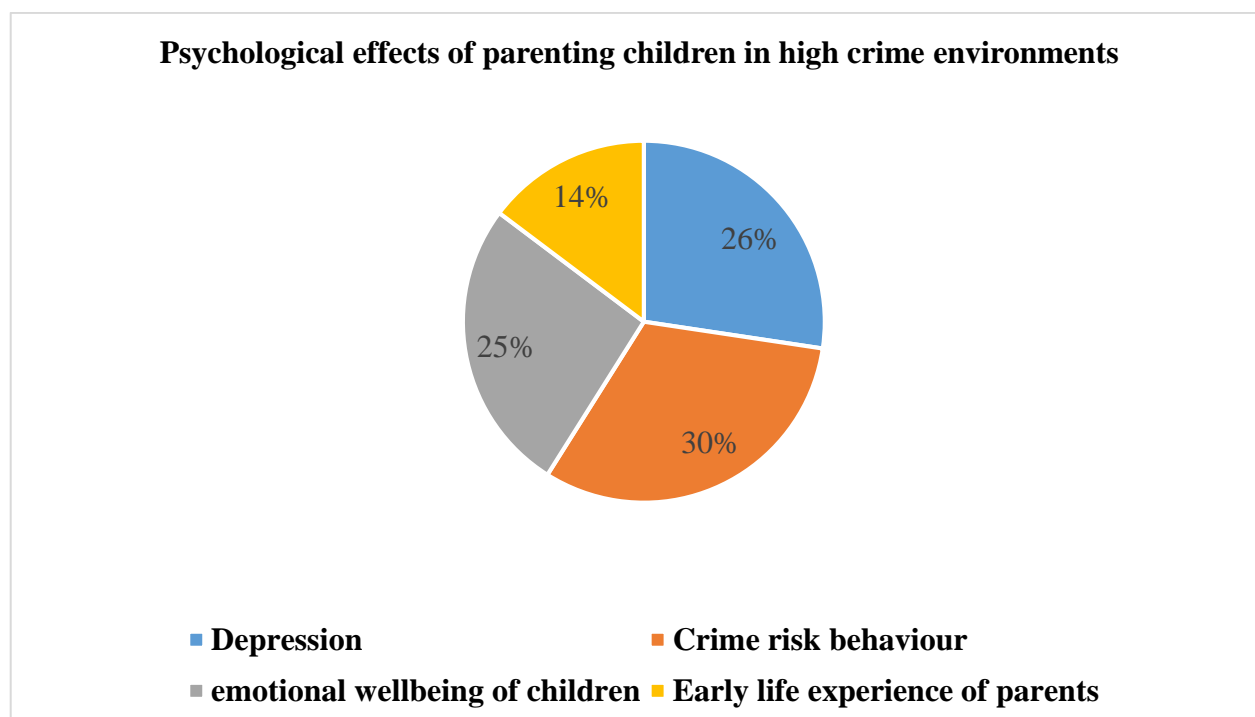
The research was conducted to determine the behavioural patterns of raising children in a high crime rate environment and the results indicate as figure 4.8 above. Based on the research, majority 32 percent reported assaults as being on the high trend in parenting children in a high crime environment, 29 percent reported cheating, 22 percent reported vandalism and 18 percent drug addiction as indicated in figure 1.3 above. The following statement was desirable to determine the issues of bringing up children in a high crime environment.

Figure 1.4. Challenges of parenting children in high crime environments

Challenges of parenting children in high crime environments

Legend: Criminal involvement, Child abuse, Child neglect, Child exploitation, Mental health problems
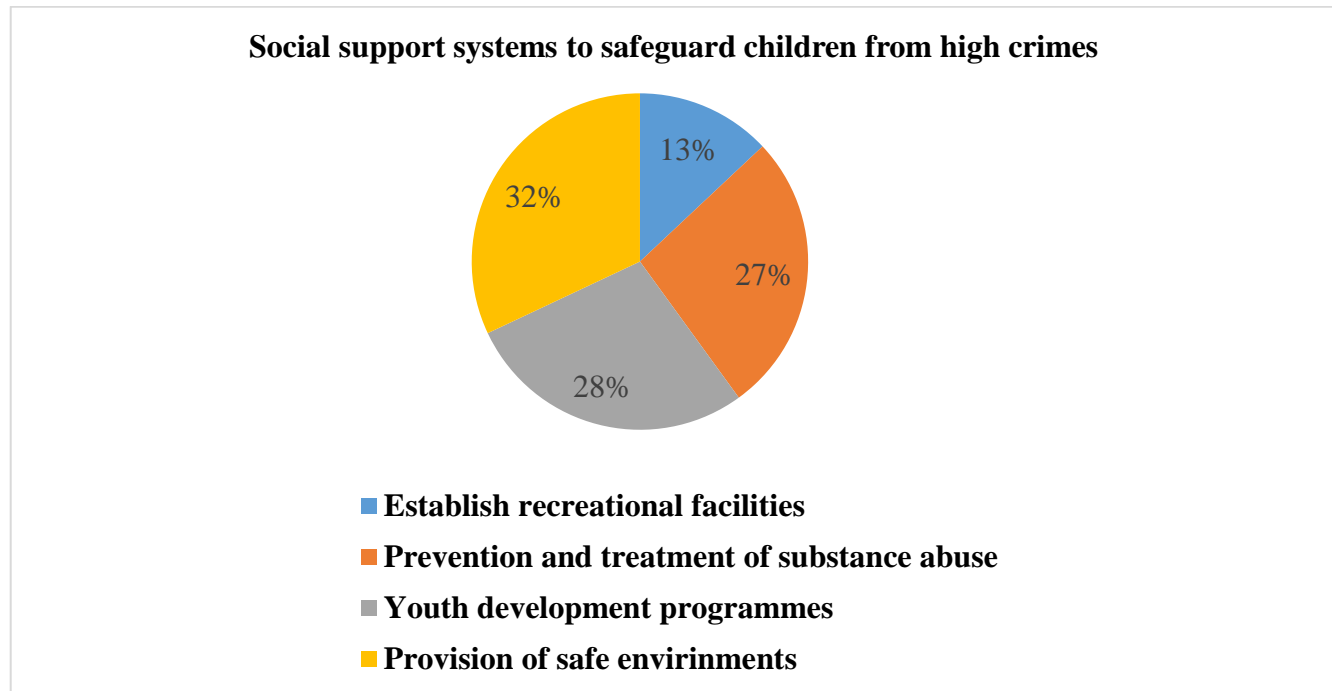
The participants were asked to respond to the question on difficulties of parenting children in the high crime areas and the findings shows that most of 30% responses indicated that the biggest problem of parenting a child in high-crime areas is child abuse, 25% responded with child neglect, 20% with child exploitation and criminal activities respectively and 5% indicated that it is mental health problems. The next statement was meant to ascertain the physiological impact of parenting children under high crime condition in Mbare.

Figure 1.5 Physiological effect of parenting children in high crime environment

Psychological effects of parenting children in high crime environments

Legend: Depression, Crime risk behaviour, emotional wellbeing of children, Early life experience of parents

Majority on the psychological effects of parenting children in high crime environment answered that, crime risk behavior category is related with parenting children in high crime environment at 30%, 26% indicated depression, 25% indicated emotional wellbeing of children and 14% indicated early life experience of parents as illustrated in figure 1.5 above. The second question examined the social support systems provisions which can be availed to protect children against high crimes.

Figure 1.6 Social support systems measures available to safeguard children from high crimes

Social support systems to safeguard children from high crimes

- ■ **Establish recreational facilities**
- ■ **Prevention and treatment of substance abuse**
- ■ **Youth development programmes**
- ■ **Provision of safe envirinments**

The measures in the study that can provide social support system to protect children in high crimes were suggested and the results are indicated in the figure 1.6 above and the results showed that provision of safe environments was cited by the majority of 32 per cent, followed by youth development programmes 28 per cent, prevention and treatment of substance abuse 27 per cent and establishment of recreational facilities 13 per cent.

CONCLUSION

The research theorizes, the relationship between parenting style and juvenile behaviour on criminal issues on a large sample size of children of Zimbabwean children in the age group of teens which is a critical age to intervene and prevent the occurrence of anti-social behaviour and aggression. The establishment of extent and direction maternal and paternal offending affects childhood behaviour before official interaction with the criminal justice system will assist in shaping early preventative measures amongst vulnerable youth. The first is the establishment of the prevalence in the group of various categories of maternal and paternal offending (eg violent, non-violent). Young offenders have the possibility to create a life in crime but reoffending rates of those who got serious, long lasting connections after serving their sentences prove to be much lower according to a long term study going over the ja easy fifty years when it followed juvenile delinquents.

It has also been concluded in the study that parental style is specifically influential in the formation of the delinquent behavior in adolescents that leads to negative consequences in the end (Kerr, 2016). It can therefore be said that indifferent parenting styles have adverse impact on the children on the psychological and behavior context. As an example, Hoskins (2019) concludes that there is a strong association between more negative behavioral outcomes and authoritarian parenting. accountability of children at national and subnational level by taking a broad-based and integrated approach in preventing violence and protection of rights and best interests of the child in all decisions including design, planning, implementation and evaluation of all legal, political, administrative and budgetary measures.

The paper establishes that physical neglect refers to non-availability of the basic care to the child like food, shelter or clothes on a regular basis. Neglects are also exhibited in the form of child abandonment, poor supervision, and careless attention to the safety of a child. Physical neglect may severely impair the normal growth and development of the child as this may result in failure to thrive, malnutrition and severe infections. Educational neglect consists of failure to present a child of mandatory school attendance age to a school or to school him or her at home, appropriately. Educational neglect may result in a situation where the child does not learn how to live a normal life and it may be a significant risk to the psychological, emotional, and social

development and well-being of a child especially where the child is not provided with special learning needs. Girls are likely to be disregarded in education more as compared to boys in most cultures.

It is also the conclusion of the study that the parent child relationship is different when the children are grown up and the child acts as an individual. The alteration of the relationship because of the changes in development is explained by the theory of the family changes in life cycle. The early adolescence developmental stage can interfere with the positive parenting style and also prompt the child to indulge into substance use. A positive mechanism would be given importance in established family systems, which could revive after being disturbed and the child will not engage in the exploitation of antisocial use. The reviewed studies have done research on the notion of parenting styles in relation to their impact on the well-being of the children, yet, they are not specific to the adopted children. The kind of parenting that had taken place in high crime environment had brought about children who were found committing crime in most part of the urban areas of Zimbabwe.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following were the recommendations in this study:

- One of the areas where policies may play essential roles is assisting parents to provide the suitable assistance to their children. The study advises that the said strategies, namely controlling of homework and excessive pressurizing of children is not always beneficial to the learning process of children. But there is nothing that parents can use most of the time. Instead, they are advised to use approaches that foster motivation, independence and self-efficacy in children so as to have the best and lasting impact.
- Financial Support: Community ought to consider other means of funding it, including involving the local businesses, Non-Government Organizations, and the governmental agencies to substantially lower the financial cost of parents. It is also possible to conduct fundraising activities and apply to grants to dedicate resources needed to children.
- Parent Education and Awareness Programs: The schools should design and offer parent education policies that focus on the criminal interest in education. Such programs are able to offer information about the good effect of parental in the learning of their child.
- Parents should also dedicate time to the children in talking to them with their problems and socializing with them. Failure to accord time to listen and hold conversations over issues and concerns with children not only will render the home environment hectic, but will also fail to achieve satisfactory development of children.
- The politicians are expected to assist the community in supporting the parents to ensure the parents sponsor their children so that they do not end up in crimes.

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