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Social Factors that Contribute to Child Abuse in Informal Settlements: A case study of Ivory Park

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CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will mainly focus on how this study was conducted firstly, by briefly describing social work research and research designed used in the study. The chapter will further explore the method of research design that was used in the study i.e. a subtype of a quantitative research design known as exploratory-descriptive design. The chapter will also outline the sampling procedure and the two sampling frames used i.e. the families and four groups of community members used in this study. Finally, there will be a description of the research tools and the data collection method that will be employed in this study.

3.2 Research Design

A research design is defined as the blue print and a detailed plan of how a research study is to be conducted (Neuman, 1997: 37). Social work research can be defined as a structured enquiry that utilizes acceptable methodology, qualitative and quantitative to solve human problems, and to create new knowledge that is generally applicable (Grinnell, 1997: 15). The goal of research in social work differs according to whether the study is described as pure or applied research. In pure research, the goal is to develop theory and expand the social work knowledge base, whilst the goal of applied research is to develop solutions to problems and their application in practice (Grinnell, 1997: 18). The present study can be described as a mix of both applied and pure research, since it aims to identify why child abuse occurs and how to respond to it in practice, within an informal settlement in South Africa.

“Research in the helping profession provides a framework for practice activities and to build knowledge for practice, it also serves practical function of providing situation specific data to inform action” (De Vos, 1998: 6). A quantitative research design was used in the present study. Quantitative research attempts to produce findings that are precise and generalisable (Rubin and Babbie, 2001: 48). This kind of a research needs the researcher to have a large sample in order to have validity so that the findings can be generalised within a given population. In a quantitative research study the researcher’s emphasis is on measuring the variables and testing hypotheses that are linked to the general causal explanations (Neuman, 1997: 123).

The study utilised a subtype a subtype of a quantitative research design, i.e. an exploratory-descriptive design. Exploratory research is useful where the problem is relatively new and in studies where a little is known (Rubin, 2001: 74). This type of a research design is used in situations where the researcher wants to develop initial ideas and a more focused research question. It has a specific purpose of exploring and gather new facts. The descriptive research design aims to facilitate the description and the exploration of new issues, and to explain why something happens (Neuman, 2000: 22). This type of study attempts to describe one factor within a problem area, and ways in which this factor is related to other factors (Grinnell, 1997: 64). The descriptive study presents a picture of the details of a situation or a social setting in which the research is being conducted. The research question for this study is a descriptive study research question and aimed to find out more about child abuse in informal settlements. The question being asked is what are the social factors that contribute to child abuse in informal settlement?

Ivory Park Informal Settlement was used as a case study. In case studies the researcher examined features, people or units at a particular time, in order to measure and describe them and to identify common features. The researcher examines cases in depth. These cases can be individuals, groups, organisations or movements (Neuman, 2000: 32). Case studies help researchers connect the

micro level or the actions of individual people to the macro level or social structures. In this instance the micro level will be the family, and the macro level will be the community. The logic of the case studies is to demonstrate a causal argument about how general social factors shape and produce results in a particular setting (Neuman, 2000: 32). The units in the present study are a group of women who are Early Development Practitioners, church members from Holy Rosary Catholic Church, a group of young people from a Youth Project, and a group of men from the area.

3.3 Sampling Procedures

Sampling is defined as a selection of units to represent an entire population (Grinnell, 1997: 237). In other words, it is to gather data some from participants within a given population and use that data as representative to describe the entire population. The primary purpose of sampling is to collect data about specific events; cases or actions that can clarify and deepen understanding of what is being studied (Neuman, 1997: 234). The sampling procedure that was used in the study is purposive sampling, also known as judgmental sampling. In purposive sampling the researcher uses his/her own judgement in selecting the sample. The basis for selecting such a sample is that it can yield considerable data that is specific to the research topic (Grinnell, 1997: 238). Therefore, the participants in this study were selected on the basis that they are suitable for the study.

There were two sampling frames in the present study, the first was the families and the second sample was the community members. The rational for using the two sampling frames within the informal settlement was to capture a broader view and the understanding of child abuse.

3.3.1 Sample of Families

There were 50 families selected from an organisation working with children and families in Ivory Park. The first 25 families were selected on the basis that they are receiving services from the organisation due to child abuse. The other 25 families were used as a form of “control group” i.e. child abuse will not be used as a criterion for inclusion. The families attended the organisation due to problems other than child abuse, e.g. foster care, maintenance and behavioural problems of the children in the family. Since the written permission to conduct the study was granted by the Director of Gauteng Department of Social Services and Population Development. The two social workers that are based in Ivory Park helped in approaching the families to inform them about the study and invited those who were interested to participate.

3.3.2 Sample of Community Members

The second sampling procedure for exploring the community member’s perceptions about child abuse and their knowledge and awareness of children’s rights was used. For the purpose of the study a community member was defined as anyone over the age of eighteen and has lived in Ivory Park for the past two years. Four groups within the Ivory Park community were used in the study. The first group was women who are Early Childhood Development Practitioners, the second group was the church members from Holy Rosary Catholic Church. The third group was the youth from Project 2005 and a group of men from a self help project in Ivory Park. The rationale for focusing on four different groups within one community was to capture the opinions of a range of community members.

3.3.2.1 Women from Early Childhood Development Practitioners

A group of women from Early Childhood Development (E.C.D) practitioners was selected; these are women running day care centres in their backyards in the community. The Social Developer working with the women introduced the researcher to the group. Then researcher attended one of their monthly meetings and invited those who were interested to participate in the study. The questionnaires were administered in their next meeting and only twenty questionnaires were randomly selected and analysed.

3.3.2.2 Church Members form Holy Rosary Church

The church members were from Holy Rosary Catholic Church in Ivory Park Extension 2. The permission to conduct the study was granted by the Father Herman van Dijck who is the Parish Priest. The researcher met with Father Herman and explained in details what the study was all about. The Father then informed the church about the study and invited those who were interested to remain after the Mass Service the following Sunday. The researcher then attended the Mass Service the next Sunday and was given an opportunity to explain to all the church members. Church members who were interested remained after the service and questionnaires were administered. Twenty questionnaires were randomly selected and analysed.

3.3.2.3 Youth from Project 2005

A group of young people was selected through Project 2005 in the area of Ivory Park. These young people are from different sections of Ivory Park and they meet weekly at the Lord Khanyile Youth Center. Most of them have completed their high school education and they are unemployed. They are involved in different community based projects on voluntary basis. Their focus in mainly on issues affecting young people in the community, and these include HIV/AIDS, unemployment, violence, substance abuse, etc. The researcher attended several

of their weekly meetings and eventually arranged to administer the questionnaires. Twenty questionnaires were randomly selected and analysed.

3.3.2.4 Men from Income Generating Project

Men from a local income-generating project were selected; it was not easy to access men from this community to participate in this study. The men are involved in different income generation projects as they were previously employed. Even though they are not formally registered, they all consider themselves self-employed. This is because they make a living from the work they are doing and through selling things at taxi ranks and at pension pay out. Eventually the researcher managed to arrange to meet with some few men and ask them to invite the bigger group. A date and time was set to introduce the researcher to the bigger group and the questionnaires were administered on the same day. Twenty questionnaires were randomly selected for data analysis purposes.

3.4 Research Tools

3.4.1 Research Tool for Families

The study utilised semi-structured interview schedule as a research tool for gathering data from the families. Semi-structured interview schedule includes few specific questions and considerable latitude is given to the interviewer to explain the research question being studied (De Vos, 1998: 128). The interviews were used with the two groups of families, so as to describe and identify social factors that contribute to child abuse. The focus of these interviews was on understanding the structure and the functioning of families, the stability and the power issues within the family and the resources and moral support for the family. The primary caregiver of the children in the family was interviewed. For the purposes of the study, the primary caregiver was defined as a person in charge for the day to day care of the children in each family.

3.4.2 Research Tool for Community Members

The research tool that was used to capture the data from community members was self- administered questionnaires. The questionnaires were administered to community members to find out their perceptions about child abuse, their knowledge and awareness on children's rights. The invitation to participate in the study was open to everyone in the particular groups and was not be limited to a certain number of participants. The aim was to invite as many participants as possible and to administer questionnaires to all participants. Then only twenty completed questionnaires per group were selected for data analysis.

3.5 Data Collection Method

"Data collection is the heartbeat of the research and the data collection methods consist of a detailed plan of procedures that aim to gather data for specific purposes, that is to answer a research question or to test hypothesis" (Grinnell, 1997: 458). Written permission to conduct the study was granted by the Chief Social Worker in the Gauteng Department of Social Services and Population Department. Once permission was granted, the researcher contacted the Department's social workers based in Ivory Park Office. The list of fifty families, their physical addresses and contact information was provided by the social workers. Twenty-five of these were abusing and the other twenty-five was non-abusing. The interviews for the families were conducted in their homes and the researcher had a community member from Ivory Park accompanying her to all the different families in the area.

3.6 Summary

As mentioned earlier the main aim of this chapter was to focus on the way in which the study was conducted. The study used the quantitative research method with an attempt to produce findings that are precise and generalisable. The exploratory-descriptive method was useful in this study, since this method is

mostly used in studies where the researcher wants to develop a deeper of the problem and a more focused research question. The rationale for using two sampling frames i.e. families and community members within this informal settlement was to capture a broader capture a broader view and the understanding of child abuse in this community.