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

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# ABSTRACT

Given the high incidences of child abuse not only in informal settlements, but in South Africa as a whole. The present study looks at the social factors that contribute to child abuse in informal settlements. To identify specific social factors in an informal settlement i.e. Ivory Park, which make children in this community to be vulnerable to child abuse. The study aims to identify different forms of child abuse, which occur in Ivory Park, to develop an understanding of the family structure and the functioning of the families. The study further explored the perception of community members on child abuse, and their knowledge and awareness on children's rights.

The study also attempts to bring to our attention that concern about the problem of child abuse is not new. It acknowledges the historical context of this problem, that throughout history children world-wide have been subjected to domination, murder, abandonment, mutilations and forced labour. Practices that seem brutal and senseless today like infanticide and ritual sacrifices of children are actually recorded in the Bible. These were considered normal and acceptable practices at the time. The systematic study of child abuse is fairly a recent phenomenon, it's only in the sixties that this issue has been discussed and debated in certain parts of the world.

The study also points out that the problem of child abuse is not unique to South Africa, but it is a problem in many parts of the world. Also that the understanding of child abuse has shifted over time. The central force behind these changes has been the establishment of various organisations in North America and Europe. These organisations opposed violence against children and advocated for the rights of the children. In South Africa this change came about when the present South African government ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Children in 1996 and also when the Rights of the Child were enshrined in Section 28 of the Bill of Rights of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa.

The study poses a question as to why child abuse cases and statistics seem to be on the rise and understanding why children are being abused when there are so many pieces of legislation and human rights documents, that aims to safeguard the interest and the protection of children particularly in South Africa. The study also looks at different theoretical perspective on child abuse to help us in terms of explaining and understanding as to why children are abuse. Finally, the study looks at different social factors specific to South Africa that might contribute to child abuse, and the history and location of Ivory Park. On the basis of the findings of this study, the researcher makes some recommendations through which professionals in the helping professions together with community members can address the problem of child abuse in informal settlement.