A STUDY OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PARENTING PROGRAMME WITH REMARRIED FAMILIES

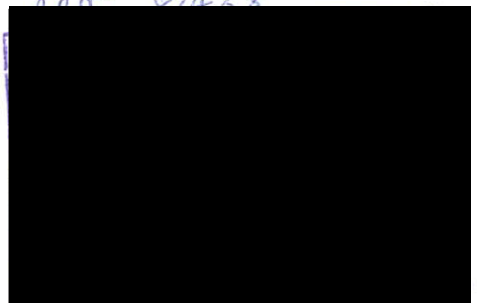### BY

MOKGADI GERMINA MABOGO (SIKHWENI)

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Social Work in the Faculty of Arts at the

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Supervisor: Professor D.W. Malaka

Co-Supervisor: Dr S.P. Molefe

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my three children

MBAVHALELO,

PHATHUTSHEDZO, and
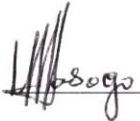
MAANDA,

who are my source of inspiration.

DECLARATION

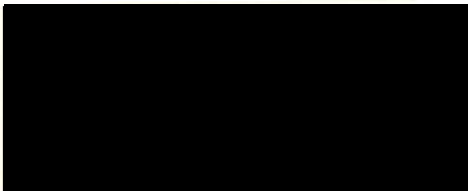I declare that: **A STUDY OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PARENTING PROGRAMME WITH REMARRIED FAMILIES** is my own work. All sources I have referred to have been indicated by means of complete references.

MOKGADI GERMINA MABOGO (SIKHWENI)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL

ORIENTATION

1.1   INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

Stepfamilies are a growing reality. They usually manifest complicated family relationships. This complexity sometimes results in conflict when problems are not handled in a proper way. Adjustment of a child in a stepfamily is dependent on the parents' ability to understand and exercise patience with a child. Usually conflict in these families evolves around the day-to-day issues such as discipline, respect, child development needs, expectations of both parents and child, relationship of children with their natural parents (non-custodial parents)etc. This study focused on possible ways of promoting positive relationships between children, parents and stepparents. To facilitate it, a parenting programme was designed and administered to parents experiencing problems in their relationship with their children.

Natural parents and stepparents were involved in the experiment so that they could learn better child management skills with regard to all the problems mentioned above.

The researcher observed that many complaints in stepfamilies were, in reality, reports of disharmony in the relationship between family members. The study thus focused on the relationships between

(i)   Stepchildren and stepparents;

(ii) Stepchildren and their natural parents, as well as

(iii) Natural parents and stepparents.

The researcher concentrated on the following factors in the study i.e. the high rate of truancy, uncontrollability, abscondment from home and delinquency in the Thohoyandou District. These factors were attributed to the negative relationships at home. From investigations that were conducted by different social workers, it was noticed that most ofthese children were from broken families, disadvantaged families, and even from stepfamilies. The acting-out behaviors were viewed as an indication of other deep seated problems in the homes of such children. This observation necessitated the experimental programme that was designed for this study.

1.2 MOTIVATION

The researcher was motivated to undertake this study due to a high caseload involving children, parents, and stepparents who frequently come to complain about each other's conduct at the welfare agency where the researcher is employed. Each expresses dissatisfaction with the other. Parents often felt that they were doing the best for the children. They often failed to see their children's point of view and they often dismissed the children's complaints as unjust. The children on the other hand needed to be understood, and they felt that their parents never listened to them.

The problems reported to the welfare agency highlighted poor communication between children, parents and stepparents. The researcher then designed a parenting programme through which skills in effective parenting could be taught to parents and stepparents who were experiencing problems with their children. The primary goal of the parenting programme was to help parents to understand their children and thus reduce conflict.

1.3 OBJECTIVES

The primary aim of the researcher in this study was to determine ways of promoting positive relationships between parents, stepparents and children. The parenting programme was designed to facilitate learning of effective parenting skills. The study was aimed at the following objectives:-

- To equip parents and stepparents with effective parenting skills;
- To use an educational approach to help parents know and understand their children's needs; and
- To encourage parents to support one another through sharing their childrearing experiences.

1.4 HYPOTHESES

A hypothesis is a statement which predicts a relationship between two or more variables i.e. independent and dependent variables.

In this study the researcher assumed that the high rate of teenage pregnancy and divorce rates in Thohoyandou give rise to stepfamilies in the area. The two factors mentioned above increase chances that people would enter into their first or second marriages with children from their previous relationships, and would in turn experience complex problems in their relationship.

As a result of the researcher's assumptions the following hypotheses were formulated
- that an effective parenting programme can promote better relationships between parents and stepparents; and
- that better child management can occur after adults have been subjected to an effective parenting programme.

The above hypotheses show a relationship between independent and dependent variables. The parenting programme is the independent variable. It is predicted that it would improve relationships (dependent variable) between parents and stepparents. Attainment of better child management skills (dependent variable) is expected to improve after parents and stepparents have attended the parenting programme (independent variable).

1.5 AREA OF STUDY

1.5.1 GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

The study was undertaken in South Africa in the Northern Province in Region 4 (Thohoyandou District). This area is located 100 km North of Pietersburg. Its Far Northern boundary is the Limpopo River, and it stretches Eastward to the Kruger National Park. In the western area it stretches to Alldays.

1.5.2 SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS

The economic system in Thohoyandou District displays three dimensions. The first one consists of families whose income is earned through migrant labour. The second one consists of farm workers, hawkers, and domestic workers. These two group are predominantly rural community residents. The third consists of the working class people, and they are mostly settled in urban areas. The Northern Province, like other provinces was affected by the South African apartheid policies e.g. resettlement and forced removals, Group areas Act, etc (These laws are no longer constitutional).

According to Barker (1988) elimination of `black spots' was instituted in 1950. `Black spots' were areas of African settlement in `white' South Africa. People who resided in what was called `black spots' were forcibly removed and resettled in other areas. For most communities it meant leaving their arable land which provided them with food for their families. They were resettled in areas which were not economically viable. It became necessary for men to go and work in urban areas in order to feed their families. Benso (1979) noted that men from the Northern Province too, took jobs as migrant labourers in urban areas. The migration of men to urban areas had a negative effect on family life because women were left alone to raise children, and inadequate parenting is attributed to this condition. Marital problems emanating from desertion and non-maintenance by migrant workers form a larger part of the social agency caseload. Spouses who have been deserted for a long time often remarry. When children from the previous marriage are brought into remarriage it results in stepparenting.

Most migrant workers took jobs in urban areas as labourers or mine workers in order to support their families. Mine owners made profit out of their cheap labour. Maylam (1988) and Mandela (1995) found that migrant workers often earned low wages. As a result they couldn't support their families left in the rural areas. Men often find `new' families in urban areas for it is convenient to share their low wages rather than send money to their wives in the rural areas. Men's involvement in the `new' families in the urban areas, long absence from home due to work commitments and, non-maintenance create strains in marriages. Marital disputes and separations are a result of these strains. When one of both spouses remarry after separation, it results in stepparenting.

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is an outline of methods techniques and instruments which are used in undertaking a study. Frankfort - Nachmias & Nachmias (1992) added that research methodology is a system of explicit rules and procedures on which research is based and against which claims for knowledge are evaluated.

Research methodology entails the study's sampling procedure, method of data collection, interpretation and analysis, and research design.

1.6.1 SAMPLING

Due to time and financial constraints, it was not possible to study all families which experience parent and stepparent - child relationship problems. A sample of 15 families comprising 45 respondents was drawn from a population of 108 families that form part of the researcher's caseload. The population in this research refers only to families which experience relationship and personal adjustment problems.

Purposive sampling procedure was used to draw a sample from the agency caseload. According to Grinnell (1988) purposive sampling can only be used when there is sufficient knowledge related to the research problem to allow selection of typical persons for inclusion in the sample.

Characteristics of the sample are the following:-
- Three respondents were drawn from each of the 15 families.
- Out of three respondents drawn from each family two were adults and one was a child who was either a pre-adolescent or an adolescent.
- Of the two adults one of them is the child's natural parent and the other one a stepparent.
- 45 respondents (3 respondents from 15 families) attended separate joint-family counselling for the purpose of resolving relationship conflicts.

1.6.2 DATA COLLECTION

In this study data was collected by using a structured interview schedule with open-ended and close-ended questions. A structured interview was preferred because it comprises standard questions. Herbert (1990) added that a structured interview is advantageous since the same words are used with each interviewee with questions given in the same order. This allows for responses from different individuals to be compared.

Other advantages of using an interview schedule for data collection have been summarized by Bailey (1982) as those of flexibility, high response rate, non-verbal behaviors, control over the environment, question order and completeness.

1.6.3 DATA ANALYSIS

Univariate and bivariate/multivariate analyses were used in this study to present pre-test and post-test data. Rubin & Babbie (1993) described Univariate analysis as the examination of the distribution of cases on only one variable at a time. Bivariate and multivariate analysis involves analysis of two or more variables at a time. Furthermore, percentages have been used to compare pre-intervention scores and post-intervention scores.

1.6.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study was exploratory since the researcher hoped to get a better understanding of conflict relationships in stepfamilies. Out of 45 respondents drawn to participate in the study, 30 were adults and 15 were children. Out of 30 adults 15 of them were selected to participate in the parenting programme. It was a one group experiment with no control group. Mason & Bramble (1989) refer to this type of design as a one group pretest post-test design. The symbolic presentation of the design is OXO

O = Experimental group's baseline information

X = Parenting programme

O = Observation after the programme.

Participants were interviewed before the programme was administered. The programme was administered over five weeks. Three months later they were interviewed for the second time. The effect of the programme is judged by a change in scores between the pretest and the post-test.

The parenting programme consisted of five sessions conducted over five weeks. Each session lasted for + 2 hours.

1.7 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

Operational concepts were defined as follows:

1.7.1 PARENTING

For the purpose of this study parenting refers to child upbringing, giving guidance and encouragement that would lead to total development of a child.

1.7.2 AUTHORITARIAN PARENTING

It is a style of parenting characterized by dominating and commanding a child i.e. children are expected to carry out orders without question. Vincent & Fontana (1976) asserted that parents who adhere to this style of parenting believe that to spare the rod spoils a child. A child's mistake is corrected by means of a stick or fist. Authoritarian parents are overly restrictive.

1.7.3 PERMISSIVE PARENTING

It means that parents allow children to do as they wish. There are no limits nor expectations put on the children's behaviors.

1.7.4 AUTHORITATIVE PARENTING

It is a parenting style in which parents teach reasoning, discipline and a sense of responsibility. The parent enforces rules in a firm and rational manner on the child.

1.7.5 MARRIED

In this study `married' refers only to first time marriages. It also includes those women who are married for the first time but brought a child(ren) from previous relationships.

1.7.6 REMARRIED

It means to marry again i.e. a second or a subsequent marriage. It occurs among the widowed or divorced persons who enter into marriages. In the study the concepts of `remarried' family and stepfamily are used interchangeably to refer to families in which one or both spouses were previously married. It consists of two or three sets of children i.e. `his', `hers' and `ours'.

1.7.7 STEPMOTHER HOUSEHOLD

It is a family in which a woman married a man who brought his children from his previous marriage into the present marriage. She becomes a stepmother to `his' children.

1.7.8 STEPFATHER HOUSEHOLD

It is a family in which a man married a woman who brought her children from her previous relationship/ marriage into the present marriage. He becomes a stepfather to `her' children.

1.7.9 STEPMOTHER - STEPFATHER HOUSEHOLD

These are families in which both spouses brought children from their previous marriages into the marriage. As a result each spouse becomes a stepparent to his/her spouse's children.

1.7.10 STEPCHILDREN

For the purpose of the study `stepchildren' means a child whose parent(s) has remarried. A child may be staying with the remarried parent, or occasionally visits the family.

1.7.11 COHABITATION

It refers to unmarried persons who stay together and are leading a `married' lifestyle.

1.8 LIMITATIONS

Limitations of the study are the following:

- **The sampling procedure**

The researcher used the purposive sampling procedure to select particular persons to participate in the parenting programme. This procedure is subjective as it is based on the researcher's knowledge about certain client families who experience stepparenting challenges. As a result of the sampling procedure, some findings may be biased.

- **The time frame**

The parenting programme was conducted over a period of five weeks. Time to observe defaulting members was limited.

- **Attendance**

53% of participants were men and 47% were women. 80% attended all five sessions, and 20% could not attend all sessions due to work commitments, illhealth, etc.

1.9 PRESENTATION OF THE STUDY

The dissertation is divided into five chapters

Chapter One   :   Deals with introduction and general orientation of the study.

Chapter Two :   Presents a theoretical background of the study, with focus on contemporary problems and family disorganisation.

Chapter Three: Deals with the administration of the parenting programme.

Chapter Four :   Focused on data collection, analysis and interpretation.

Chapter Five :   Presents summary, Conclusions and Recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

CONTEMPORARY PROBLEMS AND FAMILY DISORGANISATION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

2.2 THE EFFECTS OF CONTEMPORARY PROBLEMS ON FAMILY FUNCTIONING AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

In this chapter the researcher seeks to address how contemporary problems within the society affect family functioning as well as family relationships.

Apartheid laws affected the black families negatively as they broke the social fabric that kept families together. Families were hard hit by desertion, divorce, as well as problems that interfered with parent-child relationships.

The emerging family type that involves remarriage, poses different problems and challenges to everyone involved i.e. children, spouses, present and former in-laws. In this chapter a connection has been established between certain children's reactional behaviors and parents' subsequent marriage. Such behaviors have been found to create tensions between children, parents and stepparents which could lead to poor parent-child relationships. Due to various challenges facing members of the remarried families, the task of parenting has been shown to be challenging for some families. Although stepparenting appears to be difficult it has been found to be rewarding for some parents especially those who approach it with a relaxed attitude.

2.3   FAMILY BREAKDOWN

Nuclear and extended families are no longer the only acceptable types in society. Single parent families have increased in number as society's attitude towards unmarried motherhood and divorce has changed. There is no longer a stigma attached to being born out of wedlock or being divorced or deserted. No moral judgement is passed on the type of family that one comes from, hence remarriages too have become the order of the day, as some single parents feel lonely or inadequate and seek to remedy this problem by finding a spouse.

2.3.1   BEREAVEMENT

Bereavement occurs when one spouse is deceased. The remaining spouse is left to carry out responsibilities which were initially shared between the couple. Problems often occur as these newly acquired roles pose challenges on the surviving spouse.

Due to mobility of the nuclear families, bereaved spouses often lack adequate emotional and social support from members of the extended families. For those who find it difficult to live as single parents after bereavement, remarriage remains an option. Difficulties are encountered in the task of bringing up children alone by a parent who is granted custody after divorce.

Feelings of anger, guilt, denial, resentment and acting out behaviors are often manifested by children of divorced parents. Parents should be prepared to deal with these feelings in a constructive way in order to help children cope better.

2.3.2   DESERTION

Desertion is when one spouse leaves the other for some prolonged period without disclosing his/her whereabouts and without informing the other when he/she would be back. This is usually accompanied by complete lack of communication. The unemployed housewives and children are the first to suffer when the breadwinner deserts the family. Non-maintenance and lack of adequate parenting results in children's undesirable behaviors. Some deserted spouses often remarry.

2.3.3 DIVORCE

Divorce is a legal termination of a marriage in a court of law. For a child, divorce means that the world has gone apart. It is a traumatic process for both parents and children. Wald (1981), Pringle (1985) and Erasmus 1988) found that when parents divorce, children feel lonely and insecure.

They feel torn apart, hence when they are brought into a new family with a stepparent they tend to reject him/her. Some reactional behaviors displayed by children whose parents are divorced have been described by Kuczen (1982) as attention seeking, regression, and or deterioration of school work. Divorcing parents must be advised to provide their children with reassurance that they will continue to love them despite their marriage breakdown.

Like bereavement and desertion, the custodial parent after divorce may sometimes feel overwhelmed and emotionally exhausted. Difficulties are encountered in the task of bringing up children alone, by a parent who is granted custody after divorce.

Feelings of anger, guilt, denial, resentment and acting out behaviors are often manifested by children of divorced parents. Parents should be prepared to deal with these feelings in a constructive way in order to help children cope better.

2.4 BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS MANIFESTED BY CHILDREN FROM BROKEN HOMES AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Bereavement and divorce are devastating emotional experiences for both children and parents. Children from such families have been found to display similar behavioral problems. Due to trauma children may develop temporary behavioral problems as a way of getting attention and testing their parents' love. Richard & Gardner (1991) identified the following post traumatic behavioral problems in children, and possible solutions.

2.4.1   DENIAL

2.4.1.1. PROBLEMS

Denial is a defense mechanism. It is a natural way of protecting oneself from mental pain. A child   who uses this defense mechanism excessively does not develop a healthy adjustment, and such a child may even pretend that his/her parents have not separated.

2.4.1.2 SOLUTIONS

For children who deny to accept that their parents have gone their separate ways, possible solutions as suggested by the therapists are the following: that

-       Such children should be given personal space, and be allowed time and experience to teach them to accept reality;
-       the parents themselves should not use the denial mechanism to cope with their situation; and
-       the parents should encourage children to talk about themselves.

2.4.2   GRIEF

2.4.2.1 PROBLEMS

Grieving is a process of mourning for a person, who has departed either through divorce or death. Typical problematic behaviors shown by grieving children are preoccupation with the departed person. A child from a divorced/separated family goes through a mourning process which differs, from that of a child whose parent(s) are deceased. The former child's parent is alive and living somewhere, and the latter's parent's departure is permanent.

2.4.2.2 SOLUTION

Therapists, have suggested the following ideas to divorced parents to help children cope with grief: that

- Parents should encourage children to express their feelings;
- they should tolerate their children's repeated questions and need for reassurance;
- they should provide children with more information that would help them to understand their situation; and
- they should provide their children with opportunities for frequent contact with their departed parents either personally or by telephone.

2.4.3 SADNESS AND DEPRESSION

2.4.3.1 PROBLEMS

Sadness and depression manifest themselves in a variety of ways. A child may display lack of capacity to derive pleasure from playing. He may lose interest in peers and also withdraw from them. A child may further show loss of appetite, diminished interest in studies, and low frustration tolerance. He may become irritable, display obsessive criticism, and may even care less about personal safety. etc. Sadness and depression arise from frustrating experiences that children endure when their parents have repeated conflict and finally break-up.

2.4.3.2 SOLUTIONS

Kuczen (1982) & (Hill) 1989) contend that for children to recover from sadness and depression parents should:

- avoid power struggles; and
- try to settle their differences between themselves, (the children should never be used as pawns).

2.4.4   FEAR OF ABANDONMENT

2.4.4.1 PROBLEMS

Children tend to fantasize about abandonment. They become helpless as one parent leaves them. They experience fear that the remaining parent may also leave them. They come to view all human relationships as potentially unstable.

2.4.4.2 SOLUTIONS

In order to overcome such fear, children should be given constant reassurance that they would continue to be loved, and that both parents are still available to them inspite of the separation. Parents should help children to appreciate that they still have two parents.

2.4.5   RUNNING AWAY

2.4.5.1 PROBLEMS

There is a common practice of children absconding from home. Homeless children are a common feature in South Africa. Children run away from home for various reasons. Some of these reasons have been described by Richard & Gardner (1991) as the following:

- attracting parents' attention. When parents respond to the runaway by showing atention, it pleases the child to know that parents are concerned and still care;
- to punish those who ill-treated them;
- others run away due to guilt feelings. They blame themselves for their parents' marital difficulties;
- some run away to make parents feel guilty that their breakup in causing the child to flee;
- others flee the general atmosphere of loneliness and depression;
- others flee home in the hope that they will find the departed parent and live with him/her or convince him/her to return home.

2.4.5.2 SOLUTIONS

When a child is found and finally comes home, parents should find out the exact reason why he/she ran away. Parents should discourage the child from running away again. They should further take reasonable precautions and impose practical restraints. Parents are advised not to threaten a runaway child because that may worsen his/her problems. Furthermore parents have to make the child realize that running away is not allowed as it pains the parents.

2.4.6   INSECURITY AND LOW SELF-ESTEEM

2.4.6.1 PROBLEMS

Feelings of insecurity and low self-esteem arise from a child who feels different from those living in intact families. Parents' breakup make children feel stigmatized and unlovable.

2.4.6.2 SOLUTIONS

Parents should help children build their self-esteem by:
- giving the children genuine praise (this improves a child's perception about the self);
- helping the children to have a sense of self efficacy;
- helping the children to relate effectively with others;
- spending quality time with their children and being involved together in activities which are enjoyable to both themselves and children. A feeling that one is genuinely loved enhances self-esteem and feelings of security.

2.4.7 ANGER

2.4.7.1 PROBLEMS

Anger arises primarily from a child's frustrating experiences when parents' relationship is characterized by conflict and hostilities which not only affect the parents but the children as well. A child's anger may also arise from resentment for being different from peers;

2.4.7.2 SOLUTIONS

In order to help minimize children's anger parents should:-
- learn to be less angry with one another;
- reduce hostilities, spend less time fighting, and more time acting cooperatively towards their children.

Parents' ability to help children to understand and accept reality prepares children to attain better personal adjustment either in a single or remarried family. It provides children with the ability to tackle life's tasks especially when one or both parents remarry.

2.5 REMARRIAGE AND STEPPARENTING

The divorce rate continues to escalate, and remarriage shows the same trend. An increasing number of people tend to remarry after divorce or bereavement. Robinson (1991) & Friederich (1988) found that one third of marriages are in reality remarriages.

Remarriage is different from a first marriage because of ties each spouse has already acquired in the previous marriage with children and inlaws. Commitment to the former spouse is necessitated by the financial and custodial settlement, the extended family and friends. Due to these issues remarriage compels many people to make major personal adjustment, and it may be stressful for children, parents and even grandparents.

When children of one or both spouses are brought into a remarriage it results in stepparenting.

This may be an added responsibility for spouses who are still struggling to accomplish personal and developmental challenges.

2.5.1 PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY ADULTS IN REMARRIAGE

2.5.1.1 EMOTIONAL COMMITMENT

Emotional commitment in a remarriage requires that a divorced person should start to re-establish a bond of attraction, commitment and trust with a member of the opposite sex. Peck (1993) observed that some divorced people are reluctant to make an emotional investment in a relationship because of prior disappointment experienced through a broken marriage. They fear that such an investment may end up in another loss and it may damage one's identity and self-concept. Lack of emotional commitment may result in a stressful `remarriage, and could lead to another breakup. Skolnick & Skolnick (1986) noted that emotional commitment is a unique process, and for some it remains a trying process which they never complete.

2.5.1.2 PSYCHOLOGICAL BONDING

Psychological bonding entails learning to change from an individual identity to a couple identity. It is stressful for women than it is for men. It entails relinquishing personal freedom and autonomy that had been attained through divorce. Remarriage for a woman means changing both social status and personal identity. Men's identity is relatively independent of marital status.

Remarriage means different things to different women. Those who only hold traditional roles e.g. wife, find remarriage satisfying because it means that they would regain the traditional role and status which had been lost through divorce. Such women adjust easily in a remarriage.

Skolnick & Skolnick (1986) found that nontraditional women who attach less significance on traditional roles tend to view divorce in positive terms. For them divorce provides a way of establishing personal identity and independence. To them remarriage may represent loss of the highly valued independence and freedom. Such women manifest adjustment problems in remarriage.

2.5.1.3 ESTABLISHMENT OF FRIENDSHIP

This refers to the need for the remarried person to make alterations in establishing new relationships within the community. It is necessary that the remarried person should make an entrance into the world of couples from the world of the formerly married. Society expects remarried people to adopt a lifestyle of couples. They have to make friends with other married couples.

Establishment of new friendships after remarriage could mean losing former friends who provided an important support system during divorce or bereavement. As a result it has a potential for being strenuous.

2.5.1.4 STEPPARENTHOOD

A remarriage where children are involved results in stepparenthood. Stepparenting has been found to be a challenging task. It is made difficult due to lack of a proper definition of the stepparent's role and status.

A stepparent's position with children of a new spouse is usually not well defined. For those spouses who have no childrearing experience remarriage could mean acquiring an instant family with e.g. adolescent children.

2.5.1.5 COMPETITION AND JEALOUSIES

Competition and jealousy between remarried spouses and their former spouses, and among themselves have been found by Wald (1981) & Robinson (1991) to be a common phenomenon which may take the following forms:

- Competition between former spouses who are still bitter over a failed marriage. These spouses may express their hostile feelings by competing over children's affection. Such competition is often unhealthy for a remarried family and the children involved;

- Envy as felt by a stepparent for the freedom from childrearing responsibilities of a noncustodial parent. A stepparent often feels the burden of rearing someone else's children while a natural parent may be pursuing other activities e.g. a career;
- Jealousy of a noncustodial parent towards a stepparent who has established a comfortable relationship with children;
- Jealousy of a stepparent, (especially, one who was not married previously) of his/her spouse's relationship with natural children such jealousy may occur.
- Such jealousy may occur when a stepfather (even when he has children of his own) may feel towards his wife who is living with her children while his are living with their own mother.

While remarried spouses struggle to find a balance between their former family and their current status, children too, struggle with unique adjustments.

2.6 EFFECTS OF REMARRIAGE ON CHILDREN

For children remarriage means that they have acquired an additional parent i.e. a stepmother or stepfather. Some children may manifest difficulty in establishing a meaningful relationship with a stepparent immediately after losing a natural parent either through divorce or death. On the other hand children who had spent their early childhood in a single parent family may find entrance of a stepparent traumatic. They tend to require reorientation of family relationships.

Problems encountered by children in a remarriage have been found to be discipline, maintenance, and reactional behaviors that they display toward a stepparent.

2.6.1 DISCIPLINE

Discipline of children is one sensitive area which creates stress between stepparents and stepchildren. The amount of discipline that a stepparent may exercise is often undefined. Many stepchildren scorn discipline from their stepparents whose age put them in a peer sibling position with them. Van Pelt (1990) asserted that stepparents should stand by their spouses in disciplining stepchildren. However, at first, the children may not be receptive to discipline from a stepparent. This should not deter stepparents and make them leave all responsibility to a natural parent.

In other instances discipline problems arise when a stepparent wants to discipline a child but a natural parent interferes. Such interference tends to weaken a stepparent's position with the child. It also takes away the responsibility of disciplining a stepchild. Whereas a stepparent is expected to be a `parent' of a stepchild she/he may experience stress which is bound to affect the entire family, whenever he/she has to carry out the task of disciplining the child.

2.6.2 MAINTENANCE OF CHILDREN

Problems of maintenance arise on how spouses distribute finance among different sets of children i.e. they have to decide on whose child gets priority from the family's financial resources. Remarried women who bring children from their previous marriages are entitled to receive child support from their former spouses. This leads to a permanent bond between the woman and her former spouse. However, it is difficult to predict the family's monthly income due to sporadic child support payments. As a result children's financial needs sometimes may be postponed or the stepparent is forced to provide for them, while the bond with their natural parent is continued.

On the other hand a remarried father whose natural children are in their mother's custody has to pay child support, when additional financial needs surface unexpectedly, stress could occur in his new family.

2.6.3 REACTIONAL BEHAVIORS

Children of remarried families have been found to display reactional behaviors. Martyn (1989) and Bielenberg (1991) found that children threatened by entrance of a new parent in their lives display fear, resentment/rejection, and mistrust.

2.6.3.1 FEAR

Children who display fear and do not accept entrance of a stepparent into their lives are those who have attained a comfortable adjustment with a natural parent after divorce or bereavement. Leslie & Korman (1985) observed that children fear that their emotional involvement with their natural parent would be invaded. Many conflicts in remarried families have been found to be due to the fact that a stepparent was not accepted into a child's life. Children later resort to acting-out behaviors that show that a stepparent's presence is not welcomed. Some examples of acting-out behaviors are defiance, aggressiveness and

disobedience mainly towards a stepparent.

2.6.3.2 LACK OF TRUST

Another reactional behaviour that children may display is lack of trust. This may be due to the fact that they had felt helpless as one parent left them and their world had been shattered. They may, then, not be ready to commit themselves to a relationship with a stepparent who too may later leave them. They manifest fear in getting hurt again when a relationship between their parent and stepparent breaks.

2.6.3.3 RESENTMENT

Reactional behavior such as resentment or rejection may be displayed by children who still cling to the idea that their natural parents (who are separated/divorced) would eventually reconcile.

A stepparent is therefore seen as a person who shatters this hope. Sometimes a stepparent may be blamed for contributing to the breakup even when a stepparent was not acquainted with the natural parent at the time. Jackson (1992) Wells (1989) warned that for a remarriage to work where stepchildren are involved, a stepparent must be prepared to deal with the almost inevitable rejection from children depending on their level of maturity. A stepparent should not attempt to replace a child's absent parent. However, a stepparent may establish a caring relationship with a child

2.7   CHALLENGES FACED BY ALL FAMILY MEMBERS

Remarrying shows a triumph hope and courage that a second or subsequent marriage would be a success, but prior relationships pose a lot of challenges for a remarried family. Children, parents and stepparents may not know what to expect from each other, and may experiment with a variety of roles unsuccessfully while they seek to assume the one that is acceptable to themselves and the rest of the family. Kersten & Kersten (1988), Steyn, Strijdom, Viljoen & Bosman (1987), Wald (1981) and van Pelt (1990) concurred on the following issues as challenges facing remarried families:

2.7.1   UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

People marry for varied reasons, and some harbour hopes and expectations. When their hopes and expectations are not met they get disappointed. Prospective stepparents, spouses and children should, where possible, discuss their expectations so that the remarriage can be based on a set of realistic expectations.

Some members of remarried families have been found to hold on to the notion of `instant love'. This expectation is displayed by both natural and stepparents. A stepparent may expect instant love from a stepchild but it may not turn out as expected. However, a stepparent may develop a comfortable relationship with a child but it would not be instant. Wald (1981) found that remarried couples expect that all family members should feel positively the same toward each other. e.g. a man expects his spouse to love and accept his children (by another woman) like her own. He also expects that his children could substitute hers. Tensions and marital conflicts arise due to these unrealistic expectations.

2.7.2   DIVIDED LOYALTY

Children of remarried families suffer from divided loyalty. They belong to two households. Although they may be staying with a remarried parent, they still owe allegiance to the absent parent. This creates conflict, as they may not have severed communication with the other parent whom they still   visit. The remarried family's way of doing things may differ from that of their natural parents. This would require that children would make adjustment when they are in each family. Treadwell (1989) asserted that belonging to dual households may lead to considerable discomfort and ambiguity for children because the two households have different values, needs, procedures and interactions patterns.

2.7.3   INTERFERENCE BY IN-LAWS

Stepparents are expected to be `super parents' by their inlaws and their relationship with stepchildren is constantly  monitored. They have to handle criticisms from grandparents for being `unmotherly' toward stepchildren. These criticisms disturb the development of a spontaneous relationship between a stepparent and stepchildren. A stepparent ends up doing or saying only what he hopes would not invite criticisms from grandparents.

Another challenge facing stepparents involves the natural parent who keeps a `watchful eye'

in how a stepparent handles a stepchild. Wald (1981) contends that the need to protect one's child from e.g. a stepmother is an internalized negative image of the `wicked' stepmother. It implies that a stepmother may not be trusted to handle a stepchild properly. The   constant protection prevents the development of a meaningful and constructive relationship between a stepmother and stepchildren.

2.7.4   FAMILY IDENTITY

Identity is one's origin and a sense of belonging. Remarried   families are faced with a challenge of establishing who they are.   Usually there are two surnames in the remarried family when children of the wife's prior marriage retain the surname of their father. For the remarried woman who does not want to be seen as a stepmother, the use of two surnames by the children makes the challenge overwhelming. The usage of two or even three surnames in the family makes it known to other families that theirs is different. For other families, usage of separate surnames diffuses their goal of establishing `oneness'.

Wald (1981) found that stepchildren are usually unable to adopt their stepfather's name due to the following reasons:

- a stepchild's unwillingness to lose identity with the   missing natural parent. Some of those who adopt a stepfather's surname may later want to change to the natural father's surname. This practice is found mostly with children who are approaching adolescence or are already adolescents;
- a stepchild may wish to use a new surname but a stepfather may have difficulty in sharing a name with a child   who is not his,
- a stepchild may be willing to adopt a stepparent's surname but the natural parent may not allow it, especially if he is paying child support

Other children who have attained a comfortable relationship with both the remarried family and the absent parent may want to use both surnames i.e. they use hyphenated surnames.

2.7.5 NEED FOR AN ACCEPTABLE FRAME OF REFERENCE

Remarried couples occupy parental status for stepchildren. They carry out childrearing responsibilities similar to those carried out by natural parents. Some stepparents are disturbed when stepchildren do not address them by traditional role names but refer to them as stepmother or stepfather. They want to be addressed in terms that are associated with natural parents.

Some children do comply with the stepparent's needs to be associated with natural parents i.e. to be referred to as `mother' or "father". Usually tension arises between stepchildren and stepparents when they cannot agree on terms of address and reference. However, there are those stepchildren who adopt an avoidance strategy and do not call a stepparent anything. They do not refer to their stepparents in traditional role names. They rather refer to a stepparent as `he' or `she'.

2.7.6 INTERACTIONS WITH RELATIVES FROM THE FORMER MARRIAGE

Remarriage does not necessarily cut off ties of a remarried spouse from the former family. A non-custodial parent may still have access to children and even pay child maintenance. Children brought into the marriage may visit the other natural parent. Expectations about visits should be spelled out by spouses, and proper arrangements need to be made in order to avoid conflicts and disappointment. Friederich (1988) added that visits between children and the non-custodial parent should be long enough to allow the development of a meaningful relationship. Furthermore, movements of children should be made less stressful by developing less rigid boundaries.

2.7.7 NEED FOR ADJUSTMENT TO A NEW LIFESTYLE

Remarried spouses bring different lifestyles, beliefs and value systems which they had adhered to in their previous marriages. Due to different lifestyles tension is inevitable. One spouse and children may have been accustomed to a flexible and unstructured lifestyle, while the other spouse's lifestyle is more structured and orderly. Remarried spouses need to be accommodating and strive for a blended lifestyle so that value systems and priorities can be merged.

Wald (1981) warned that differences in parenting styles may result in feelings that one is lenient with `her' children and is harsh' with `mine'. Such differences on how children should be brought up may lead to marital conflict and parents-child relationship problems.

2.8   MERITS OF REMARRIED FAMILIES

When problems encountered by parents, children and other significant family members have been shown as above, it depicts remarriages as only prone to problems; yet remarriages have their merits, too.

2.8.1   ADVANTAGES TO ADULTS

2.8.1.1 RESTORATION OF SOCIETAL NORMS

Societal norms use marriage as a yardstick for living within society's normal expectations. For those divorced/bereaved people who feel that their marital status implies that they are living against social norms, remarriage restores `normality'.

2.8.1.2 COMPLEMENTARITY OF ROLES

A stepparent and a natural parent may complement each other in their roles. One spouse might cater for the family's financial needs while the other may care for children and carry out household chores. This would be an advantage for both the remarried spouses and children.

2.8.2   ADVANTAGES FOR CHILDREN

2.8.2.1 ACQUIRING ADDITIONAL ROLE MODELS

When parents remarry, children acquire a "third" parent. A stepparent provides stepchildren with an additional role model. They may learn skills from stepparents as well as natural parents. An extra parent figure can also mean that there is another adult to provide children with emotional support.

2.8.2.2 RECYCLED FATHER

According to Kersten & Kersten (1988) a recycled father is the one who carries out childrearing responsibilities a second-time around with a different perspective. Furthermore, they found that a stepfather may feel committed to raising stepchildren because he had missed rearing his own children and may want to see his stepchildren come out right.

On the other hand, a stepfather may somewhat feel less concerned about how his stepchildren will turn out. As a result he may approach them in a relaxed manner and be more accepting of their behaviors. Such acceptance could ease tensions between them, and help the children grow in self-confidence.

2.9   POLITICAL REPRESSION AND CHILDREN

Many restrictions imposed on parents by South Africa's apartheid policy in the past e.g. police raids for permits and forced removals made parents appear ineffective. Parents were under stress which affected them negatively in their parenting roles. In the children's perception, parents appeared helpless and unable to stand for what is rightfully theirs. According to Burma and Reynolds (1986) oppressive laws robbed parents of pride and self-respect.

Maylam (1989) & Barker (1988) share the view that the purpose of the 1976 students' uprisings was to register dissatisfaction with the government about the education system. Although the uprisings started in Soweto, the defiance spread countrywide and numerous communities (both rural and urban) were affected. It could be assumed that children took to the streets because they questioned their parents' power and authority to persuade the state to legislate in their favour. It is known that children's mobilized political power had an impact on the South African policy. It was a political victory but it also affected parent-child relations in that families witnessed power reversal. Parents lost control of their children and experienced great stress as they could no longer predict nor control their children.

2.10   UNEMPLOYMENT

Unemployment in South Africa is a major problem. Le Roux (1993) found that unemployment in other communities is around 60% both in rural and urban communities.

For a parent, unemployment means inability to fulfill the basic role of providing for the family. It takes away one's self respect, and the feeling of losing self-worth sets in. It affects the parents' assertiveness and authority in parenting.

In South Africa many families are plunged into absolute poverty because of unemployment. Nitto & Dye (1983) assert that it is not possible to define poverty without referring to various policies that govern the country. In the South African context, policies that are attributable to the state of economy are found in the umbrella policy of apartheid. Poverty and unemployment may not be separated from the principle of deprivation, unequal distribution of resources and exploitation. The legacy of apartheid will still take years to uproot.

Unemployment causes many parents to fail to give their children a decent living with proper housing, food, clothes, medical attention, education and entertainment. It robs the parent of human dignity and respect which are the corner stones in parenting activities. As a result of the escalating rate of unemployment, society suffers from what Le Roux (1993) refers to as an `anti-child' culture, and many youth problems have their origin from it. Parents are unable to provide a proper home which can be a refuge for children from tensions outside home. The housing conditions do not encourage children to spend much time at home, and the culture of street kids and juvenile delinquency may be attributed to it.

Parke (1984) asserts that the father's loss of a job or unemployment creates many difficulties for him. It causes him to lose his self-esteem and the respect of his wife and children. Furthermore, he realized that the father's unemployment and family violence have a possible relationship. It was also established that the greater amount of time the father spends at home increases the probability of conflict. It also has an impact on the father's discipline roles, as tension occurs due to the diminished resources.

2.11   PARENT - YOUTH CONFLICT

Other than political   factors which affected parent - child relationship, developmental factors also have an influence on it. Developmental factors are more influential especially when a child is a pre-adolescent or an adolescent. Parent-youth conflict at this stage of development is a common feature.

Ausubel, Montemajor & Svajian (1977) Maccoby (1980) Rosemond (1990), Gardner (1992) Specht & Craig (1982) concurred that the following factors are the main cause of parent-youth conflict during adolescence:

2.11.1 PARENT'S ATTITUDE

This involves the parent's willingness to allow an adolescent to attain individuality and `letting go'.  Allowing individuality and independence means a partial end to family togetherness.  This is painful especially for parents because they fear that `letting go' means losing a member. Parents want children to remain dependent on them. The parents' inability to let a child attain independence, and an attempt to control a child beyond the point where it is appropriate result in parent - youth conflict. However, Maccoby (1980) urged that children should be given the freedom to develop but there should be clearly defined limits.

2.11.2 REDEFINITION OF PARENT-YOUTH RELATIONSHIP

An adolescent is no longer a small child and should not be handled as one. West-Meads (1995) asserted that it is necessary for parents to redefine their relationship to suit the adolescent's developmental needs. Parental dominance should be replaced by increasing involvement of children and invitation of ideas in matters that are relevant to the adolescent's life. Rosemond (1990) & Dobson (1988) found   that through involvement and participation, adolescents find   comfort in the home, and as a result the more dramatic and unfortunate behaviors can be avoided. On the contrary, acting out behaviors such as running away, uncontrolability, etc occur when a healthy parent - youth relationship has not been established.

2.11.3 DIFFERING VALUES

Values that adolescents hold often differ from those of their parents. This tends to be a source of conflict. However, values are not static. They change with time, hence proper adjustments need to be made in order to accommodate changes in value systems. Usually parents approach problems of their children in the background of their own experiences when they were at a similar age. It is   when parents' values and those held by youth are not congruent that conflict arises.

2.11.4 DEFIANCE

This entails challenging parental authority for no reason. An adolescent adopts a hostile attitude towards parents because it is fashionable with the peer group. The family and the school are targets of a certain amount of defiance. Gardner (1992) refers to this stage of development as the `untouchable' stage. Adolescents are looking for confirmation or denial of their ideals.

The parents become targets of defiance as they are viewed by adolescents as representatives of society. They pose a threat to adolescents who feel that society denies them an equal status. To the child the parent seems to represent an obstacle which hinders him from obtaining his goal in society. The child resents and challenges the parent as an authority figure. Defiance of parents is used to express anger towards the entire adult society.

2.12   FAMILY VIOLENCE

The concept of family violence is broad. It includes violence between all members of the family e.g. between parents and children, abuse of grandparents etc. For the purpose of this study, family violence has been confined only to violent relationships between spouses. Family violence is a phenomenon which occurs in different forms i.e. physical, emotional, and economic violence. It also occurs across class, creed and colour. Teichman & Teichman (1989) found that uncontrollable anger in some individuals account for their violent behaviors. This could be a category of individuals who have never learnt appropriate ways of channelling anger, or those who find losing temper more rewarding than controlling it. Furthermore, Levine (1986) added that emotionally dominated children due to deficient parenting are often forced to repress anger, and this could erupt in later life, and thus cause

terrible physical and emotional damage to its victims. The mass media also has contributed towards the development of violent behavior in that it portrays aggressive people as heroes.

2.12.1   FORMS OF FAMILY   VIOLENCE

1.12.1.1   PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

All forms of family violence disturbs marital stability e.g.   the victim experiences a poor self-esteem and it in turn affects effective parenting. The concept of violence has been defined by the Concise Oxford Dictionary (1991) as `the unlawful exercise of physical power. It is a pattern of behavior which the abuser directs to the victim to inflict pain and or injury.

Howwell & Pugliesie's (1988) investigation on self-reported violence revealed that the majority of the perpetrators of physical violence are men. It was established that due to cultural norms held by both the abuser and the victim, society encourages such behaviors to occur.

2.12.1.2   EMOTIONAL VIOLENCE

Various forms of emotional violence have been identified by Howwell & Pugliesie (1988) amongst other:
-        belittling the spouse in private or in public;
-        devaluing opinions;
-        constant criticisms; etc.

The victim of emotional violence loses self-confidence and suffers from a poor self-image, which are cornerstones for effective parenting.

Although surgery can repair damage and scars caused by physical abuse, the scars inflicted by emotional violence may take years to heal, and in some cases therapy may not treat emotional scars successfully. Victims of abusive relationships experience feelings of low self-esteem, loss of confidence in the self, and feelings of helplessness.

2.12.1.3   ECONOMIC VIOLENCE

Economic violence entails that the abuser takes away the economic power and independence of the victim, as a way of punishing him/her.

Patriarchism and an exaggerated emphasis on roughness and   toughness as a sign of manhood encourage the perpetrator to use violence in order to control the victim. Some women continue to stay in abusive relationships because of fear that they would be stigmatized. They also blame themselves for the abuser's behaviors, and feel obliged to make their marriage   work. Others persevere in such relationships due to financial dependence on the perpetrator.

The problem of family violence shows an increasing rate. Levine (1986) termed the 1980's the decade of family violence. It could be assumed that ineffective intervention and lack of support for victims are factors accountable for a high rate of family violence. Furthermore, it was noted by the researcher that 60% of marital dispute cases handled at the social agency are caused by one form of violence or a combination of all. 40% of   these cases end up in separation or divorce, and half of them become single parents while
others enter into second marriages and stepparenting.

2.13   CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this chapter has explored various conditions which are attributable to poor parent-child relationships, e.g. family violence, family breakdown, remarriage and its effects on both children and their parents.

Although divorce is generally acceptable and less stigma is attached to it, it still represents failure. Some people cope with such a crisis effectively, but for some it remains a trying experience. Success of subsequent relationships is dependent on available coping skills in individuals.

People who divorce after being married for several years may have problems of adjustment in a remarriage because they have become used to some relationship patterns, and changing from them may be difficult. Younger children who experience parents' divorce and remarriage attain better adjustment than adolescents.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PARENTING PROGRAMME

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The remarried or reconstituted family structure is established when a divorced or widowed spouse brings into a new partnership his or her children. Other reconstituted families are created when a man marries a woman who has children born out of wedlock. Such families experience complex changes which make blending difficult. The challenges that exist in such marriages include unrealistic expectations by spouses, unresolved mourning, interference of former families, inadequate understanding of problems and needs of children, etc. Members of remarried families need support in order to alleviate relationship conflicts which may emanate from the above challenges.

The following parenting programme was designed by the researcher for members of remarried families in order to help them attain better social functioning. The treatment approach which was used is referred to as a social or problem oriented approach by Garvin (1981) or a remedial approach by Alissi (1980). Its purpose is to treat problems of adjustment in personal and social relationships.

Objectives of the parenting programme were:-

- to empower parents and stepparents with effective parenting skills;
- to encourage them to learn about children's needs;
- to encourage them to learn from one another by sharing childrearing experiences; and
- to provide them with skills for dealing with interference from the extended family.

Participants in the parenting programme were selected by the researcher from the agency caseload. The characteristics of families that were chosen for participation are as follows:

- Each family had at least one natural parent and a stepparent;
- One or both spouses had brought children of their previous marriages into the present one; and
- Each family had an adolescent who is in conflict either with the natural parent or the stepparent, or both.

Fifteen families selected from the caseload had the above-mentioned characteristics. The fifteen families had a total of 45 members who could have participated in the programme but only fifteen adults participated in group discussions.

The group contract consisted of the following:

- time:- the starting time for sessions was 14h00
- attendance:- every member was to attend. The group worker was to be informed about a member's absence. A member who was absent had to update himself/herself by contacting others to find out what had been discussed in the previous session(s)
- participation of every group member was invited for the purpose of reaching group objectives. (Letters of the alphabet of A to O have been used to identify the fifteen participants.

Each session of the programme consisted of

- Feedback:- this is a report back from participants about the task they were assigned to carry out.
- Brainstorming:- This is a combined intellectual treatment of a problem by discussing spontaneous ideas about a particular subject/topic.
- Input:- Here, the worker highlighted those facts which participants had not mentioned during `brainstorming'. It is also a further explanation of different viewpoints that were given out in the discussion.
- Homework:- Participants were assigned tasks to carry out at home in preparation for the next session.
- Evaluation:- This was done by the researcher to evaluate every session in order to plan for the next session.

The parenting programme was designed by the researcher with technical framework adapted from Landman (1989) - Positive Parenting Skills for South African Parents.

3.2 SESSION NO 1

3.2.1 PURPOSE OF THE SESSION

The purpose of the session was to:
- Introduce group members to one another
- Explain the purpose of the group, and contract;
- Discuss changes and challenges facing parents.

3.2.2 MEMBERS PRESENT

A, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, M = 67%

3.2.3 MEMBERS ABSENT

B, K, L, O, N = 33%

3.2.4 BRAINSTORMING:-

Group members brainstormed on children's needs, changes and challenges that affect them in their roles as parents. They highlighted the following points:

- **Competition for love**

They mentioned that children compare and compete for their parents' love. A parent is usually accused of being unfair to one child as compared to his/her treatment of other children.

- **Financial Challenges**

Children usually demand expensive things which they as parents cannot afford e.g. expensive clothes and birthday parties.

- **Generation Gap**

They highlighted that parents are regarded by their children as `backwards' and unable to understand current issues. This perception sometimes creates conflict between parents and children when they cannot agree on a certain way of doing things e.g. type of clothes to be bought. Children clamour for fashionable clothes which parents may not afford due to financial constraints or poverty.

- Household chores

Group members expressed concern over the fact that children are reluctant to carry out household chores. This causes a lot of disorganization in the family. In many instances a parent (especially mothers) has to carry out a lot of responsibilities which could otherwise be shared. Another area of conflict with regard to chores is a conservative outlook e.g. a parent tends to expect a child to carry out the same responsibilities which he had carried out as a child e.g. herding cattle, a chore that modern kids refuse to carry out.

3.2.5 INPUT

The researcher highlighted the following points with regard to group members' concerns: Due to children's different personality needs and age, parents are likely to give one child more attention than the other. Furthermore, some children are more likeable than others, due to their good conduct, and parents may give them more attention than the troublesome ones. However parents were encouraged to avoid situations in which children compete for their love and attention.

With regard to children's financial demands which parents cannot cope with, it was suggested that children should be made aware of the family's financial position. Details concerning the income and savings within the family should be provided to those children who could be trusted to keep such details confidential.

The concern that the generation gap creates relationship problems should not be overemphasized. Open and flexible communication patterns could cease tension and misunderstanding.

The objectives of assigning household chores is to train children to be responsible. The child as a future adult should share responsibilities with other family members. The inconveniences created when a certain chore is not carried out should be explained to the child. Household chores should be planned in such a way that they would allow a child to have time to play, rest and study. Chores should be discussed with children so that they are clarified of their responsibilities.

After the worker's input, some group members agreed that children should be well informed about the general financial position of their families. They reiterated that knowledge about financial matters would reduce the task of explaining to them that what they demand cannot be afforded. In this way children would be helped to learn to differentiate between needs and wants.

Many participants reached an agreement that children should be assigned chores, and be encouraged to carry such chores out. They acknowledged that a child who has no chores to carry out would not learn to be responsible. They further stated that a child who is unoccupied, idles and may not know what to do for the rest of the day. Such a child is prone to engage in undesirable behavior.

3.2.6 HOMEWORK

Group members were assigned a task to consciously observe issues that made them experience misunderstanding with their children, and to analyse how such issues posed challenges to them as parents. Such issues would be discussed in the next session.

3.2.7 EVALUATION

-        A, C, D, E, F, J were the most eloquent. They often initiated discussions and expressed their opinions more freely than others

-        G, H, I, and M rarely talked. They were followers. They usually agreed with other group members' ideas. They supported others through non-verbal behavior such as nodding when an important idea was expressed.

3.3. SESSION 2

3.3.1 PURPOSE OF THE SESSION
The purpose of the session was to:

-        discuss feedback of the previous homework; and
-        discuss factors that influence children's behaviors

3.3.2 MEMBERS PRESENT

A, C, D, E, F, G, H, K, M, I, O = 73%

3.3.3 MEMBERS ABSENT

B, L, N, J = 27%

3.3.4 FEEDBACK AND DISCUSSION

Some members suggested that the financial aspect which had already been discussed in session 1 should be repeated for the sake of the members who had left the discussion earlier. The group members reiterated that children's involvement in financial discussions would relieve parents of unnecessary conflict. It would reduce competition for items such as clothes and toys. They emphasized that older children should be well informed about the family's financial position so that they could learn self-control with regard to their wants. The group felt that the older children would assist parents in teaching younger siblings about financial responsibility. Group members who were absent from session 1, especially `B' and `L' were not comfortable with the fact that children could be informed about the family's financial matters. They stated that a child's status in the family is such that he/she could not be involved in discussions concerning financial matters. The new members felt that involvement of children in financial matters would upset their spouses.

During this session one member who had disagreed with the idea of children's involvement in financial matters, mentioned that he had once found himself in a difficult situation when all his four school going children had wanted to go on a school trip. He could not afford to pay for all of them due to limited financial resources. It had been difficult to choose from the four kids which one could go on the trip.

The group reviewed the above situation as an example of what often happens in families. They emphasized that had the four children known and understood that the family's financial resources were inadequate, they would have assisted in working it out among themselves as to who should go on the trip; or they would have devised some means of saving money for future trips.

3.3.5 INPUT

The researcher acknowledged difficulties in introducing changes in the family, especially children's involvement in financial matters. The following facts were highlighted:

-       Introducing change in the family should be a joint agreement. Spouses should discuss among themselves and agree on the extent to which a child may be given access to financial information. Spouses should agree on tasks which could teach a child financial responsibility, e.g. assigning an older child the task of compiling a list of the family's monthly groceries.

-       Older children could be involved in financial matters, especially when a child's demands are more than what the parent can afford. An informed child is better than the one who makes financial demands without the knowledge that the family's financial resources are limited:

3.3.6 BRAINSTORMING

The group members brainstormed on factors which influence a child's behavior. Group members shared the following ideas.

-       `B' led the discussion on family conflict, separation and divorce as factors which affect how a child interprets life. The group expressed concern that conflict between spouses tends to confuse children. Children tend to think that it is a way of living and they adopt this confusion. They later become confused in life. Participants repeatedly talked of children's failure to understand their parent's inability to cope financially.

-       Participants further brainstormed around difficulties that custodial parents encounter when they have to explain the cause of the family break-up. They acknowledged that children need an explanation on the issues that had led to the breakup of a marriage, but adults often find it difficult to   explain the intricacies of a marriage breakdown to their children.

Participants also pointed out that children were usually prone to pass judgement with regard to who of the parents was guilty of causing conflict. It was also mentioned that

children tend to build up anger against the `guilty' party. Participants expressed the opinion that the custodial parent should try to provide objective information to children about the break-up.

The fact that children could have witnessed physical violence before the parents' break-up might influence a child's behavior towards one parent. The participants, however, felt that there was need for children to be provided with necessary details, and that they should be assisted in understanding simple explanations of how the marriage had broken up.

3.3.7 INPUT

The researcher led the discussion and highlighted the following:-

- Personal factors - Certain inborn traits determine how a person responds to each situation for instance, a child's behaviour may be influenced by inherited characteristics.
- Birth order:- A child's birth position in the family i.e. whether he is the first, middle, or youngest child exposes him/her to a variety of attitudes and expectations from parents. It has influence on how a child behaves.

Eldest child:-

The eldest child experiences much pressure from parents to meet their expectations. Such a child is expected to be successful and independent. A middle child usually plays the role of a mediator, and s/he becomes good at manipulating other family members.

Youngest child

The youngest child tends to experience less pressure from both siblings and parents. They tend to be protective towards him and are accommodating of his weaknesses.

- **Gender awareness**

Common tendencies are for parents to handle children of different sexes differently e.g. girls are expected to do household chores while boys read, watch television and/or play with peers.

-        **Major life experiences**

Children who experienced their parents' separation or divorce, or losing a parent through death, tend to feel insecure and confused. The emotional experiences have an influence on their behavior in later life.

-        **Stage of development**

Each stage of development is characterized by change. Change is traumatic. Various stages of development especially from pre-adolescence to adulthood are marked by physical, emotional and social change. All these changes may influence a child's behavior.

3.3.8 HOMEWORK

In concluding the session, participants were assigned a task to identify ways in which a child who experienced parents' separation/divorce could be assisted to attain better adjustment

3.3.9 EVALUATION

-        The group demonstrated cohesion. They participated actively and the feeling of belonging together began to surface.
-        `A' participated actively during the time of giving feedback, but rarely talked during the other part of the session. This could be attributed to the fact that she was the youngest participant and had no experience in adolescents' problems.
-        C, D and F assumed the advisor and catalyst role, They were always there when a deadlock was reached. B, J and G always took time to agree on certain issues. They internalized their values and belief systems
-        C, D, F and N, J, G, formed separate subgroups that complemented one another during discussions. They helped each other to analyse facts, and their relationship positively strengthened the group activities.

3.4 SESSION 3

3.4.1 PURPOSE OF THE SESSION

The purpose of the session was to:

- discuss feedback of a task assigned to participants during session No. 2; and
- Watch a video entitled "You are still Mum and Dad" produced for the New Zealand Family Courts Association.

3.4.2 MEMBERS PRESENT

A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, K, M, N, O = 80%

3.4.3 MEMBERS ABSENT

I, J, L = 20%

3.4.4 FEEDBACK AND DISCUSSION

Participants identified the following aspects as ways in which a child who had experienced his/her parents' separation/divorce could be assisted to attain better adjustment:

- That parents should show understanding of a child's post-separation problems. They agreed that parents should be able to reassure a child about love and continued security;
- Participants expressed the fact that a child's ability to cope in such a crisis is dependent upon the parents' ability to;
- recover from the crisis;
- talk about separation and divorce implications;
- understand a child's feelings and exercise patience; as well as;
- accommodate the fact that a child needs to have access to the non-custodial parent;

-    they also pointed out that a child's adjustment depends on the available support
     system for the family e.g. a parent should have relatives or friends to turn to for advice
     and support. Participants furthermore emphasized that a child needs quality time.
     This may encourage closeness between parents and the child, and it may also
     help to build a child's self-esteem.

Participants acknowledged that a child needs to have access to, and to visit the absent parent.
However, they agreed that a child should be discouraged from visiting a parent who is a
deviant e.g. a thief. They also agreed that a child's relationship with other family members
may not be severed e.g. grandparents. If however, contacts with them created tension and/or
misunderstanding, this should be resolved through discussion with the child concerned.

3.4.5 INPUT

It was emphasized that a child adjusts and copes better when a parent shows a loving and
caring relationship. A child also needs reassurance that he/she will continue to be loved
despite the break-up.

The researcher also mentioned that children need to be encouraged to express their feelings.
This should be followed by a parent's ability to listen actively in order to provide support.
Spending quality time with each child was emphasised as this could help to give undivided
attention to each child.

3.4.6 VIEWING

The video entitled: "You are still Mum and Dad". This was shown in order to help
participants to understand themselves and their children's post-separation disorders such as
denial, feelings of shame, anxiety, pessimism, guilt, and depression, as well as the recurrent
recollection of traumatic events

The video emphasized the needs and emotions experienced by children when their parents
separate or divorce. It also conveyed that children should be informed of their parents'
divorce in such a way that it does not negatively affect their sense of security.

Furthermore, it emphasized that although parents may terminate their spousal relationship, they were however, duty-bound to continue their relationship with the child as they were still his/her parents. Divorced or separated parents still have to support one another in childrearing matters.

3.4.7 HOMEWORK

The participants were assigned a task to identify factors that hinder adjustment of a remarried family.

3.4.8 EVALUATION

At this stage, the researcher observed the following:

- that group cohesion had become more intense. Participants talked to each other more easily and were becoming less dependent on the researcher for support;
- eight participants had diligently carried out their homework. This facilitated active participation.
- `E' displayed an objective analysis of issues under discussion, and had a better understanding of children's post-separation behaviors. He had been very instrumental in assisting other participants. `B'' displayed leadership skills as he led the discussions without dominating others.

3.5 SESSION 4

3.5.1 PURPOSE OF THE SESSION

The purpose of the session was to:

- discuss feedback: Factors that hinder adjustment of a remarried family

3.5.2 MEMBERS PRESENT

A, D, C, E, F, H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O = 87%

3.5.3 MEMBERS ABSENT

B, G = 13%

3.5.4 FEEDBACK AND DISCUSSION

Factors that hinder adjustment of a remarried family. The following issues were highlighted.

- **Child maintenance**

The group stated that child maintenance that was paid by a former spouse into the remarried family created problems, especially the `out of court settlement'. It was felt that it served to encourage regular contacts between former spouses. Opinions raised were that it gave an impression that the child support payment encouraged former spouses to reconcile, and this posed a threat to the stability of the remarried family. However other participants especially `E' and `F' felt that child maintenance paid into the remarried family should be welcomed as long as it did not threaten the existence of the remarried family relationships.

- **Reference and identity problems**

The participants mentioned that children were inclined to complicate the remarried couples' relationship by their tendency to outrightly reject changing their surname and adopting the stepparents'. Problems were further caused by their refusal to call him/her daddy or mummy. This created tension especially when a stepparent feels that he/she is responsible for their well-being. When children use a surname that is different from the remarried couples', the family becomes divided.

- **Sibling rivalry and competition:**

Participants talked of sibling rivalry and competition as other factors which make adjustment of a remarried family difficult. Children who do not welcome the arrival of a stepparent's children create difficulty for the remarried family. They agreed that children should be reassured of their position and security in the family to facilitate welcoming of a stepparent's children.

- **Discriminatory treatment of children:**

They raised opinions that unequal treatment of `his' and `her' children created difficulties, and it becomes even more problematic when grandparents interfere. When unfair treatment of

children is conspicuous in the family, children tend to be rebellious and show lack of respect either to a stepmother or stepfather.

Problems caused by former in-laws:

Group members expressed concern over in-laws who do not acknowledge the remarried family ties. These are members of the extended family who may pursue their relationship with a remarried spouse. They interfere in the discipline of the children and visit the remarried family regularly. This may foster lack of trust between the remarried spouses, and it may be the beginning of conflict and a second separation.

3.5.5 INPUT

The following were highlighted by the researcher in order to help participants understand their concerns better:

- that child maintenance is a legal responsibility and there are different ways of paying it. Spouses need to talk more openly about this and agree on an arrangement which fits their situation;

- that other children in stepfamilies, especially in the remarried family, like to keep their natural parent's name. The need for identity has been found to be a challenge for children in such families. Older children should be involved in taking a decision changing from one surname to the other. It is more convenient when done this way than when it is imposed on them. Parents should be able to accommodate a child's opinion on this issue. It is a fact that the natural parent's relationship is irreplaceable. A stepparent should not strive to do so. However, a stepparent and a child may establish a warm and caring relationship. It happens that even in such a caring relationship a child may not feel comfortable to refer to a stepparent as `mum' or `dad' since those concepts refer to a natural parent. For those children who can refer to a stepparent as `mum' or `dad', it is good, but, children should never be forced to refer to a stepparent as `mum' or `dad' against his/her will since this may foster resentment and rejection of a stepparent.

- Separation, divorce and bereavement tend to foster feelings of insecurity in children. When a child from another marriage comes to a remarried family, children of a former marriage feel threatened and insecure at the arrival of a new

family member. Sibling rivalry and competition may be a way of protecting one's environment against the `intruder' Parents should reassure children of ownership, and sibling rivalry will ultimately subside as children get used to each other.

Concerns about unequal treatment of children in a remarried family should be resolved in privacy, between spouses before other members of the extended family interfere. Children need the same rules in the family, and spouses should agree on them. Spouses need to put a united front before the children about discipline. In the beginning, a stepparent should only support a natural parent in maintaining discipline since resentment is aroused in a child when a stepparent takes a forefront position too   soon in disciplining him/her. A stepparent should gradually take his/her place in maintaining discipline when a child has come to terms with circumstances of a remarried family.

- Some former in-laws may be genuinely interested in their former-son-in-law or former daughter-in-law whether they remarry or not. These are a group of inlaws who need patience and understanding from the remarried couple. They also need a longer time to come to terms with a remarried former son or daughter in-law. The ability to handle these inlaws depends on the quality of the remarried couples' relationship. Former in-laws cannot be wished away, especially when there were children in the broken marriage.

3.5.6 HOMEWORK
Participants were assigned a task to identify discipline problems that are manifested by their children.

3.5.7 EVALUATION

In this session `D' and `E' led the discussion. The session centred mainly on:

- child maintenance and the remarried family;
- Identity problems;
- Sibling rivalry and competition; as well as
- Interference of former in-laws in remarried families.

3.6   SESSION 5

3.6.1 PURPOSE OF THE SESSION

The purpose of the session was to:

- discuss discipline matters; and
- summarize and close-up

3.6.2 MEMBERS PRESENT

A, B, C, D, E, H, I, K, L, M, N, = 73%

3.6.3 MEMBERS ABSENT

A, G, I, O = 27%

3.6.4 FEEDBACK AND DISCUSSION

Participants highlighted the following factors as discipline problems with their children.

- poor school performance and lack of seriousness in the child's studies;
- too much attention given to a pet while routine responsibilities are neglected by the child;
- misuse of the telephone by children resulting in high telephone bills for the family.

3.6.5 <u>INPUT</u>

An explanation was given on the nature of effective discipline rules. It was accepted that rules should consist of a child' discipline problems and that they also should be paired with what a child likes to do most. For instance, poor school performance (discipline) should be paired with going out for trips. A child should be made aware of the fact that he/she may not go out for school trips unless he attains better grades.

Conditions for rules included that;

- rules should be stated clearly;
- they should be clearly defined;
- they should be reasonable; and that

- only rules which could be enforced should be made

The discipline model as adopted from Landman (1989) was applied with participants on how to work out discipline problems on e.g. poor school performances:

STAGE A:-   Describe the situation.

Make your child aware of your concern that he is performing poorly at school when he/she has a potential to obtain better grades.

STAGE B:- Construct an "I - message".

"I feel disappointed about the fact that you do not give your school work much   attention."

STAGE C: Tell the child specifically how you expect him/her to behave.

"I expect you to improve your grades by the end of this term."

STAGE D :- Give a choice.

"Either you put much effort in your school work or you will miss school trips"

STAGE E:-   Take action or consequences.

"No school trips until you have put some effort into your work."

STAGE F:- Acknowledge the child's feelings

"I understand that you feel bitter about the fact that you did not go out with other school kids but this is the way things should be".

It was emphasized that a noble principle about rules is for parents to make rules and enforce them. A child may not give school work attention and still obtain poor grades as a way of testing the firmness of the rule. Once a child realizes that rules are made but not kept, he/she gets away with it.

3.6.6 GENERAL COMMENTS

Participants made general comments about child development.

They expressed opinions that child development posed challenges to parents especially in a remarried family. When children grow up, it becomes necessary for them to be provided with information on `growing-up'. Participants felt that it was difficult to talk to adolescents, especially about matters concerning bodily changes. They stated that a father finds it difficult to impart knowledge on e.g. menstruation and personal hygiene, to daughters yet a stepmother who should do it may show lack of interest in raising `his' children.

Participants agreed that lack of support from one spouse in raising children should be worked out between the couple. They further concurred that in case there was no remarkable improvement in the stepmother - stepdaughter relationship, one should involve relatives who could impart knowledge to a `growing' child.

Another comment raised by participants was the effectiveness of physical punishment in effecting change in a child's misbehavior. They wanted to know when was physical punishment regarded as enough to change a child's behavior. `B', `E' and `F' indicated that the use of physical punishment did not work effectively for them and their children. They mentioned that children resented punishment and it further tended to strain parent-child relationships.

3.6.7 INPUT

- Child development

Every stage of development is marked by changes. The adolescent stage is further marked by rapid emotional, physical and social changes. A child at this stage needs parental support and understanding in order to cope better with the overwhelming changes. A child starts to develop a thinking pattern different from others', experiences changes in general body functioning e.g. onset of menstruation; and also begins to have a circle of friends. Parents should be able to guide a child through this stage, and for those who are unable to do so assistance should be sought from reliable friends, relatives or child care institutions.

- Physical punishment.

Beating up a child for misbehavior is regarded as a parent's way of showing desperation for change. It is a way of getting rid of frustration caused by misbehavior. However, it does not justify its use. Parents should be able to use other methods of punishment other than beating-up e.g. isolation, deprivation and withdrawal of privileges. Beating-up a child may be used as a last resort when other forms of discipline do not work.

However, parents need to differentiate between punishable behavior and childish behavior. A child may not be punished for behaving in a childish manner. A child may be punished for challenging parental authority, repeated misbehavior, or engaging in behavior that puts his/her or other people's lives in danger.

It was also emphasized that physical punishment had different meanings for the different children. For some, it meant that parents impose themselves on others because they are bigger and stronger. For others it meant that parents are there to pass out judgement, and as a result a child may resent it. However, children need to be warned that certain behavior is punishable.

3.6.8 EVALUATION

-       Session 5 was longer than the others. Four participants had carried out their assignments, and the first part of the discussion centred mainly on that participants' general comments on remarried spouses' ability to support each other in raising   children led to self-disclosure. This prolonged the session. Other participants empathized with those who showed that they needed support in their circumstances.

3.7 CONCLUSIONS

The parenting programme was conducted over five sessions. Each session was characterized by different communication patterns, and also by absenteeism of other participants.

The first session was characterized by communication between the worker and participants. Participants did not appear to trust each other, and as a result only the confident and outspoken members participated in the discussion. In the second session confidentiality was emphasized by participants, and communication started flowing. Group cohesion too began

to show. The third and fourth sessions were characterized by feelings of belongingness and greater group cohesion. The fifth session was marked by emotional interdependence, prolonging work and clinging together for comfort. Benson (1987) & Anstey (1983) indicated that such behavior as shown by participants in the fifth session is a natural reaction at the ending stage of the group.

Each session was marked by absenteeism of certain members. Reasons for absenteeism were given as follows:

- **Work commitments**

Members were absent in some sessions because they were at work. Some worked away from home and came home only once a week and could not attend all five sessions .

- **Illhealth**

Two members suffered from ill-health. As the programme spread over five sessions, they missed on other sessions.

- **Destination**

Three members stayed in remote areas. They were unemployed and could not manage to pay for the weekly transport fare nor could they walk to the agency to attend the programme.

CHAPTER FOUR
DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS
AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

4.2 DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The stage of data collection is a difficult, costly and time consuming one in research. Of the 45 respondents who were selected to participate in the study, 15 adults were interviewed individually before participating in the parenting programme i.e. collection of pre-intervention data. Data was collected through a structured interview with both open-ended and close ended questions. After this, a parenting programme was administered over five weeks with the 15 respondents. Three months after they had participated in the programme a second interview was conducted with each participant, i.e. collection of post-intervention data.

Univariate and multivariate tables were used to analyse data. In many instances, two tables have been used to analyse and compare pre-intervention and post-intervention scores. Furthermore, percentages have been used in each table to quantify data. The impact of the parenting programme is shown by differences between pre-intervention scores and post-intervention scores.

TABLE 1 - AGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS

AGE	NO OF RESPONDENTS	%
16-20	1	7
21-25	0	0
26-30	0	0
31-35	2	13
36-40	3	20
41-45	5	33
46-50	2	13
51-55	1	7
56-60	1	7
TOTAL	15	100

Age distribution of spouses from stepfamilies revealed that the age range of 36-40 and 41-45 are more represented in the study than other age categories. Divorce rate is high

among the 36-40 and 41-45 age range, and they often remarry more often after divorce than other age categories e.g. 51-55 age group.

From the data that was collected, it was revealed that the youngest bride who had married for the first time fell in the category between ages 16 and 20 years. She was found to be 16 years younger than her spouse. In a study conducted by Wald (1981), it was stated that younger spouses in a remarriage are more inclined to assume a sibling position with older stepchildren. They seldom realize the stepparent child position. Lack of generational boundaries cause competition e.g. between stepmother and stepchild. The two compete for attention of the man who has to play the role of husband and father, respectively.

TABLE 2 - MARITAL STATUS OF RESPONDENTS

MARITAL STATUS	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	%
Married	3	20
Remarried	7	47
Separated	2	13
Widowed	1	7
Cohabiting	2	13
TOTAL	15	100

20% of the respondents stated that they were in their first marriages. They were all women. They had, however, married spouses who were previously married. Out of 47% respondents who were in their second or third marriages, 40% were men and they had brought children of their previous marriages into the current marriage.

The study further revealed that 13% of the respondents were separated from their spouses. Out of 13%, 7% were seeing prospective spouses.

Only 7% of the respondents who indicated that they were remarried stated their reason as widowhood unlike like the 47% who had remarried after divorce.
13% female respondents stated that they had not legalized their marriages, as they preferred cohabitation. They stated that they were not yet ready for permanent settlement

with their present partners. All the respondents in this category had children from their previous marriages.

Skolnick & Skolnick (1986) revealed the following data that were confirmed in the present study:

-       that men are inclined to remarry soon after their marriages are broken. (In   the study 40% men stated that they had remarried and only 7% women had remarried;

-       that divorced men rarely ever marry divorcees. In the present study the 20% women who indicated that they were in their first marriages were all married to men who were divorcees.

The authors further revealed that divorced men who usually entered into second or subsequent marriages were those who had custody of their children, and they did so partly because they felt a need to have a spouse who would help with the rearing of their children. In the current study, not only was this fact confirmed, but further it was revealed that the men who enter into   remarriages are usually affluent. For instance 7% of the divorced men were involved in polygamous marriages. The fact that 47% of respondents had remarried confirmed Friederich's (1988) and Herbert's (1988) findings that out of every three marriages one is a remarriage.

TABLE 3 - EDUCATIONAL STANDARD OF RESPONDENTS

EDUCATIONAL STANDARD	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	%
0-2	1	7
3-5	6	40
6-8	3	20
9-10	5	33
TOTAL	15	100

Of the total respondents, only 7% had never been to school. They were women and they had experienced a lot of problems with their elder sons, in their `marriage'. They were found to be in the category of parents who had lost authority over their children.

The majority i.e. 40% had schooling between std 3 and std 5. 20% had been to school up to std 8, and 33% had up to std 10 and also had post matric diplomas.

TABLE 4 - OCCUPATION OF RESPONDENTS

OCCUPATION	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	%
Housewife	3	20
Labourer	3	20
Professionals	3	20
Self employed	1	7
Unemployed	1	7
Old age	1	7
TOTAL	15	100

20% of respondents indicated that they were housewives. They further mentioned that they depended on their spouses for financial support. 60% of the respondents held a variety of jobs and were thus able to provide for their families' basic financial needs. 7% were self - employed and/had no fixed monthly income, The 7% who were unemployed were trying to find employment, while another 7% stated that they cannot take up jobs due to old age. The latter mentioned that they depended on welfare poor relief schemes for survival, and their older children who were employed also assisted them financially.

The study revealed that:

- 20% of respondents who were housewives were all stepmothers. The fact that they were at home for the most part of the day, increased their chances of experiencing conflict with their stepchildren;
- parent and stepparent relationship problems are experienced across all occupational lines.

TABLE 5 - TYPES OF HOUSEHOLD

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	%
Stepfather-Stepmother	3	20
Stepmother	7	47
Stepfather	5	33
TOTAL	15	100

20% of the respondents were in stepfather - stepmother households. In this type of a household both spouses brought children from their previous marriages into the current marriage. This could be a source of potential conflict if the different family members were unable to adjust to each other.

47% of the respondents were in stepmother households in that men had brought children from their previous marriages into the current one. As a result the women had become stepmother to their spouses' children; hence the stepmother household. Findings confirmed that of the 47% respondents;

- 20% were childless.
- 7% had children from their previous relationships but did not bring them into their present marriages; and
- 20% had their first children in these families

33% of the respondents were in the stepfather household. The women had brought children from previous marriages while the men did not. As a result the men had become stepfathers to their spouses' children. Out of the 33% of the stepfathers, 26% had been previously married.

TABLE 6 - PRE-INTERVENTION DATA ON CLASSIFICATION OF CHILDREN
IN EACH HOUSEHOLD

CLASSIFICATION

NAME OF HOUSEHOLD	'HIS	'OURS'	'HERS'	TOTAL
A	5	1	-	6
B	4	2	1	7
C	-	3	3	6
D	-	-	4	4
E	2	2	1	5
F	3	4	7	-
G	4	2	1	7
H	-	-	2	2
I	3	-	-	3
J	1	8	-	9
K	1	-	-	1
L	1	2	-	3
M	2	-	-	2
N	-	-	2	2
O	-	-	3	3
TOTAL	26	24	17	67

A total number of 67 children was found in the families that were included in the sample. Of these 26 had been brought by their fathers into the current marriage; while 17 had been brought by their mothers and another 24 had been born in the stepfamily unions.

It is generally taken for granted that when parents separate or divorce custody of children is usually granted to the mother. In this study, however, findings revealed a different trend in custody matters relating to the 26 children.

- 20% of the fathers who had brought children from their previous marriages had been granted custody of those children by a court of law;

- 33% of fathers had been granted custody through customary law procedures;

-        while 13% of the fathers had retained custody of their children after their spouses had passed away.

The above findings support investigations that were conducted by Smart & Sevenhuijsen (1989). These researchers had found that due to fathers' greater involvement in their children's lives, preference for maternal custody had decreased.

TABLE 7 - POST-INTERVENTION DATA ON CLASSIFICATION OF CHILDREN IN EACH HOUSEHOLD

CLASSIFICATION

NAME OF HOUSEHOLD	HIS	OURS	HERS	TOTAL
A	5	1	-	6
B	1	2	1	4
C	-	4	3	7
D	-	-	-	4
E	2	2	1	5
F	3	4	-	7
G	3	2	1	6
H	-	-	2	2
I	3	0	-	3
J	-	8	-	8
K	1	-	-	1
L	1	2	-	3
M	2	-	-	2
N	-	-	2	2
O	-	-	3	3
TOTAL= 15	21	24	17	63

Post-interventions investigations revealed that 5 children had left their families. Three stepdaughters left the `B' household due to a strained stepdaughter- stepmother

relationship. Initially they had not been reported as problematic. In the stepfather family `C' one child had been born and this had increased the number of children in the family. Two adolescents (one each from the G & J families) who had been reported as problematic, had subsequently left home.

TABLE 8 - AGE DISTRIBUTION OF PROBLEMATIC CHILDREN IN FAMILIES

AGE	NO OF RESPONDENTS	%
15	1	7
16	2	13
17	6	40
18	2	13
19	1	7
20	1	7
22	2	13
TOTAL	15	100

Of the children who had been included in the sample 20% were below the age of 17 years, while 40% were seventeen years old. A total of 60% of the children were in the early adolescent stage while 40% were in the late stage of adolescent. Their ages ranged between 18 and 22 years. All the children who had been reported as problematic were adolescents and the researcher understood that they were at a stage which posed a double challenge to their parents, stepparents, and the children themselves. They had to cope with developmental changes as well as relationship adjustment in the remarried families. The challenges they faced were both inter and intrapersonal.

TABLE 9 - PRE-INTERVENTION RESPONSE ON FORMULATION OF
DISCIPLINE IN THE FAMILY

RESPONSE	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	%
Father & Stepmother	4	27
Father	6	40
Mother	3	20
Mother & Stepfather	2	13
TOTAL	15	100

27% of the respondents stated that the father and stepmother formulated discipline for
children together. It showed that they have similar authority over children. In 40% of the
families father formulated discipline alone. This is a potential for conflict between parents
and stepparent when only one parent is the lawmaker.

In only 20% of the families the mothers formulated discipline alone, while in 13% of the
families the mother and stepfather formulated discipline together.

Briefly, the research revealed that in 40% of the families stepparents and natural parents share
control and authority in parenting, while in 60% of the families natural parents either mothers
or fathers exclude their spouses in discipline formulation. According to a study conducted by
Hill (1989) when natural and stepparents work jointly to formulate discipline, they serve as a
united front to their children, and it helps to reduce problems. However, when natural parents
formulate discipline of the children by themselves to the exclusion of their spouses in a
stepparent family, then this tends to weaken the position of the stepparent.

TABLE 10 -   POST-INTERVENTION RESPONSE ON FORMULATION OF
               DISCIPLINE IN THE FAMILY

RESPONSE	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	%
Father & Stepmother	8	53
Father	2	13
Mother	1	7
Mother & Stepfather	4	27
TOTAL	15	100

Post-intervention data revealed that in 53% of the families joint discipline of the children by
husband and wife had begun. This showed a 27% change as compared to pre-intervention
data) In 13% of the families, discipline was still the mothers prerogative to the exclusion of
the spouses. In 27% of the families the mother and stepmother were equally involved in
discipline matters (reflected a 13% improvement of joint-involvement in discipline
formulation).

TABLE 11 - PRE-INTERVENTION RESPONSE ON MAINTENANCE OF DISCIPLINE

RESPONSE	NO. OF RESPONSE	%
Father & Stepmother	4	27
Father	7	46
Mother	3	20
Mother & Stepfather	1	7
TOTAL	15	100

In 27% families both father and stepmother enforced discipline together. Of the 47% of the
fathers who maintained discipline unilaterally, (7% were reported as enforcing it and not as
formulating it (Table 10).   In 20% of the families the mothers unilaterally enforced discipline
while in 7% families mothers and stepfathers together enforced discipline.

The research revealed that   fathers are lawmakers and lawkeepers even in remarried families.
Men often remarry after divorce or widowhood as compared with women. This explains why
they formulate and keep discipline even in second or subsequent marriages.

TABLE 12 - POST -INTERVENTION RESPONSE ON MAINTENANCE OF
DISCIPLINE

RESPONSE	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	%
Father & Stepfather	10	67
Father	2	13
Mother	1	7
Mother & Stepfather	2	13
TOTAL	15	100

Post-intervention data revealed that in 66% of the families discipline was enforced by both
fathers and stepmothers. (The parenting programme had an impact in improving perception
about who should enforce discipline in the family i.e. 39% improvement). Only in 13% of
the families did fathers enforce discipline unilaterally, while in 13% mother and stepfather
families both parents enforced it together (an improvement of 6% as compared to the pre-
intervention response in table - 11)

TABLE 13 - PRE-INTERVENTION RESPONSE ON CHILD MANAGEMENT

RESPONSE	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	%
Yes	9	60
No	6	40
TOTAL	15	100

Investigations showed that in 60% of the families there are separate rules for boys and girls.
It is culturally acceptable that parents expect girls to carry out chores, or behave within
certain limits and expectations, while boys are left with little or no restrictions at all. In
remarried families where there are usually two or three sets of children this could be a source
of tension between children, and even between parents. In the present study, 40% of the
families indicated that children were subjected to the same rules.

TABLE 14 - POST - INTERVENTION RESPONSE ON CHILD MANAGEMENT.

RESPONSE	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	%
Yes	3	20
No	12	80
TOTAL	15	100

Post-intervention data indicated that in 20% of the families children were still subjected to different rules, while in 80% of the families children were treated similarly. (There had been an improvement of 20% in child management skills

TABLE 15 - PRE-INTERVENTION RESPONSE ON THE PARENTING STYLE

PARENTING STYLE	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	%
Authoritative	6	40
Permissive	5	33
Authoritarian	4	27
TOTAL	15	100

Two fifths of parents stated that they communicated clearly and openly with their children. These were found to be middle aged, literate parents who occupied relatively satisfying jobs. Apparently such parents understood their children better due to their exposure to literature on child upbringing and behavior.

One third of the parents indicated that they had made rules but it was up to the child to follow them. 13% of these parents were young stepmothers. They were inclined to adopt an indifferent and uninvolved parenting style due to lack of childrearing experience, or as a way of avoiding conflict with their stepchildren.

Authoritarian parents comprised 27% of the group who made out orders and expected them to be carried out as they were. Shirley (1979) showed that the autocratic system failed

invarious institutions including the home because no one wants to bow down to orders any longer, not even women nor children. Apparently such parents maintained a strong cultural tradition which enforced rules on children and expected absolute compliance.

TABLE 16 - POST-INTERVENTION RESPONSE ON THE PARENTING STYLE

RESPONSE	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	%
Authoritative	10	67
Permissive	2	13
Authoritative	3	20
TOTAL	15	100

After the parenting programme more than two thirds of the parents presented themselves as authoritative parents. They showed a 20% improvement as compared to the 40% response before intervention. Of the 33% respondents who had presented themselves as permissive parents before, 20% had adopted an authoritative parenting style after attending the parenting programme. Of the 27% who had presented themselves as authoritative parents before, only 7% had changed their autocratic attitude in parenting. The latter findings in the study confirmed Fontana & Vincent's (1976) findings about authoritative parents. Their findings had shown that authoritative parents are the hardest to work with and are often reluctant to change their attitudes in childrearing practices. They are a category of parents who believe that a stick and a fist are necessary means of support in childrearing.

TABLE 17 - PRE-INTERVENTION RESPONSE ON EXPRESSION OF FEELINGS
BY CHILDREN

RESPONSE	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	%
Never express feelings	4	27
Occasionally express feelings	4	27
Sometimes express feelings	5	33
Always express feelings	2	13
TOTAL	15	100

27% of the respondents stated that they never give their children a chance to say how they feel about certain issues. This is a category of parents who believe that children's feelings do not have a significant impact in decision-making; while the other 27% stated that they occasionally give children a chance to express their feelings. One third stated that they regularly gave their children a chance to express their feelings. They took into account a child's age, maturity and the capacity to understand the consequences of certain issues. while 13% stated that they always give children a chance to express their feelings.

TABLE 18 - POST-INTERVENTION RESPONSE ON EXPRESSION OF
FEELINGS BY CHILDREN

RESPONSE	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	%
Never express feelings	2	13
Occasionally express feelings	5	33
Sometimes express feelings	7	47
Always	1	7
TOTAL	15	100

After the administration of the parenting programme it was found that of the 27%

respondents who initially did not give their children an opportunity to express their feelings, 13% had learnt to do so. 33% of the respondents occasionally allowed expression of feelings by children, while 47% sometimes gave their children a chance to express feelings. (There was an improvement by 13% as initially only 33% respondents had shown that they gave children a chance to say how they felt. Eyre & Eyre (1994) found that parents' ability to encourage expression of feelings by children, made the children feel valuable and it helped to build up their self-confidence. Only 7% of the respondents mentioned that they still allowed children to express their feelings randomly.

TABLE 19 - PRE-INTERVENTION RESPONSE ON EXPRESSION OF OPINIONS BY CHILDREN

RESPONSE	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	%
Never express opinion	10	67
Occasionally express opinion	2	13
Sometimes express opinion	1	7
Always express opinion	2	13
TOTAL	15	100

Pre-intervention findings revealed that 67% respondents never consulted with their children on issues that were relevant in their lives. They made decisions that involved children without any contribution from them. 13% of the parents stated that they occasionally invited their children's opinions, while 7% the of parents stated that sometimes they did invite their children's opinions. Only 13% mentioned that they had always invited their children's opinions in matters that were relevant in their lives. Briefly then, this study revealed that the majority of parents (67%) had not regarded their children's opinions as important. It was not a good indicator for a balanced parent-child relationship. Dobson (1982) argued that a child who is given an opportunity to express his/her opinions while parents listen genuinely attains a better self-image than the one who is never consulted.

TABLE 20 - POST-INTERVENTION RESPONSE ON EXPRESSION OF OPINIONS BY
        CHILDREN

RESPONSE	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	%
Never express opinion	2	13
Occasionally expresses opinion	2	13
Sometimes	1	7
Always	10	67
TOTAL	15	100

Post-intervention findings revealed that of the 67% parents who initially had never invited their children's opinions, 54% had learnt to invite children's opinions, thus only 13% of the parents stated that they still do not consult their children.

During the training sessions, it was observed that those respondents who stated that they never invite their children's opinion or those who do so occasionally expressed that young children's opinions were not necessary, yet seldom invited the adolescents to participate. 13% of the parents stated that they had occasionally invited the children 's opinions, while another 13% stated that they had sometimes consulted with their children. 67% of the respondents stated that they always invited their children's opinions.

TABLE 21 - PRE-INTERVENTION RESPONSE ON CONFLICT RESOLUTION

RESPONSE	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	%
Never resolve conflict	10	67
Occasionally resolve conflict	2	13
Sometimes resolve conflict	2	13
Always resolve conflict	1	7
TOTAL	15	100

The majority of respondents (67%) stated that they do not talk matters over with their children after experiencing conflict. It was observed that an inability to settle conflict is more

frequent in permissive and authoritarian families. The permissive parenting style lacks firmness in disciplining a child and as a result conflict may never be settled completely. The authoritarian style breeds disobedience and defiance, and this makes settling of conflict more difficult. 13% of the parents showed that they do resolve conflict but at irregular or infrequent occasions, while the other 13% of the parents stated that sometimes they resolved conflict. Only 7% of the parents stated that they always talked it over when they experienced conflict with their children. Briefly then, the pre-intervention response revealed that only 33% of the respondents had learnt to resolve conflict between themselves and their children.

TABLE 22 - POST-INTERVENTION RESPONSE ON CONFLICT RESOLUTION

RESPONSE	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	%
Never resolve conflict	3	20
Occasionally resolve conflict	3	20
Sometimes resolves conflict	2	13
Always resolves conflict	7	47
TOTAL	15	100

A remarkable improvement in attitudes of parents was observed after training as indicated on table 21. Of the 67% who had said that they never talk things over with their children, only 20% still persisted that they did not resolve conflict between themselves and their children. Scores had improved too on those who did so sometimes (From 13% to 20%), and for those who always resolved conflict scores had improved from 7% - 47%. It shows that 40% of the respondents had learnt to resolve conflict between themselves and their children after attending the parenting programme.

TABLE 23 - PRE-INTERVENTION RESPONSE ON TYPES OF MISBEHAVIORS
MANIFESTED BY CHILDREN. N= 15

MISBEHAVIOR	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	%
Aggressiveness	13	87
Coming home late	11	73
Running away	8	53
Disobedience	9	60
Neglecting	6	40
Alcohol and drug abuse	5	33
Sexually active	7	47
Stealing	2	13
Others	1	7

Pre-intervention scores revealed that 87% of the respondents had experienced children's aggressive behavior. It was observed that:

- 40% of these were father - stepmother households, and the children's aggression was directed toward both father and stepmother;

- Stepmother - stepdaughter relationship was characterized by conflict and aggression more often than stepmother - stepson relationship.

- 20% of the respondents who were stepfathers stated that they had experienced both hostility and aggression from their stepsons and stepdaughters. Such attitudes had been directed only towards them and not the natural parents of the children.

- 27% of the natural fathers stated that they had experienced aggressive behavior mostly from their natural sons.

73% of the respondents mentioned that the children did not observe curfew. They came home late and occasionally left home without informing parents of where they were going or when they would come back.

Findings further revealed that children from 53% of the families had run away 20% of the children had absconded from both home and school; while 33% had absconded only from

home but continued attending school.

In 60% households children displayed disobedience. They did not carry out requests nor accounted for their behaviors. 40% of the respondents showed that children neglected to carry out their routine responsibilities, while 33% stated that their children were experimenting with drugs and alcohol. 46% of the respondents stated that their children were actively involved in intimate relationships with members of the opposite sex. Only 7% of the respondents complained of other misbehaviors other than those mentioned above i.e. parent physical abuse.

TABLE 24 -   POST-INTERVENTION RESPONSE ON TYPES OF
                       MISBEHAVIORS MANIFESTED BY CHILDREN. N = 15

MISBEHAVIOR	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	%
Aggressiveness	8	53
Coming home late	7	47
Running away	7	47
Disobedience	5	33
Neglecting chores	8	53
Alcohol and drug abuse	6	40
Sexually active	9	60
Stealing	-	-
Others	-	-

Post-intervention findings showed that there had been a decrease in certain misbehaviors manifested by children. Aggressiveness decreased from 87% - 53%, while the number of children who did not observe curfew had improved from 73% - 47%. Runaway children's scores decreased from 53% - 47%. Disobedience in 60% of the families improved because only 33% families still indicated that they were experiencing children's disobedient behaviors. It is believed that the above improvements could be attributed to the fact that parents had learnt effective child-management skills which helped them to deal with these misbehaviors effectively. Parents had learnt to understand children's developmental needs.

However, post-intervention scores revealed an increase in certain problematic behaviors. The

rate of neglecting chores increased by 13%, alcohol and drug abuse increased by 7%, while children's involvement with members of the opposite sex increased by 13%.

Post-intervention data was collected three months after parents had attended the training programme. An increase in the above children's misbehaviors could be attributed to the fact that

- 13% of the children had `grown up' and were now sexually aware than before, and as a result they had become involved with members of the opposite sex;
- 13% of the children who abused alcohol and drugs were adolescents who had started going out with members of the opposite sex too. The behavior of the children could be attributed to their stage of development i.e. adolescence. Fenwick & Smith (1993) and Penner & Penner (1988) asserted that adolescence is a staged characterized by emotional, social and physical changes, and some youths often experiment with either sex or drugs.

TABLE 25 - PRE-INTERVENTION RESPONSE ON PARENTS'
INTERPRETATION OF CHILDREN'S MISBEHAVIOR

RESPONSE	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	%
Testing rules	10	67
Draw attention	2	13
Escapes from certain frustrations	1	7
All the above	0	-
Other, please specify	2	13
TOTAL	15	100

The majority of the respondents (67%) interpreted children's misbehavior as their way of testing rules. Such an interpretation accounted for confrontational methods which parents used to protect the rules they had made for the children. This had resulted in a strained parent-child relationship. 13% of the respondents stated that they had interpreted children's misbehavior as their attempt to draw attention; while 7% had regarded it as an attempt on the part of the children to escape from certain frustrations. Only 13% of respondents stated that they did not understand why their children misbehaved. They also did not know how to help them correct such misbehavior.

TABLE 26 - POST-INTERVENTION RESPONSE ON PARENTS'
INTERPRETATION OF CHILDREN'S MISBEHAVIOR

RESPONSE	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	%
Testing rules	3	20
Draw attention	2	13
Escape from certain frustration	1	7
All the above	9	60
Others	0	-
TOTAL	15	100

Of the 67% respondents who had interpreted children's misbehavior as testing rules only

20% still persisted in their interpretation. (47% of the respondents had learnt to interpret children's misbehavior differently). The majority of respondents (60%) had learnt that children misbehave due to all reasons mentioned in the above table. In the pre-intervention table, no respondent had stated that children misbehaved due to all the above reasons. It showed that respondents had gained a better perspective on children's misbehavior. Of the 13% who had initially not understood why children behaved as they did, post-intervention data revealed that they had gained knowledge on their children's misbehavior.

TABLE 27 - PRE-INTERVENTION RESPONSE ON PARENTS' RESPONSE
TO CHILDREN'S MISBEHAVIOR

RESPONSE	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	%
Send a strong " I"-message	4	27
Let results take course	3	20
Smack the child	6	40
All the above	2	13
	15	100

27% of the respondents had let their children know how they had felt about misbehavior. They were in a category of parents who reasoned with the child and expected him/her to assume responsibility in learning desirable behavior. 20% of the respondents had left the child to experience the consequences of his/her misbehavior. 40% of the respondents had indicated that they had smacked the child in order to correct his/her misbehavior. The researcher observed that such parents repeatedly smacked the children for various misbehaviors. 13% of the respondents stated that they had used all the methods selectively mentioned in Table 25 to correct misbehavior. They had individualized each situation and applied an appropriate response to each.

TABLE 28 - POST-INTERVENTION RESPONSE ON PARENTS' RESPONSE TO CHILDREN'S MISBEHAVIOR

RESPONSE	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	%
Send a strong "I"-message	3	20
Let results take course	2	13
Smack the child	3	20
All the above	8	57
TOTAL	15	100

Of the 47% respondents who had relied only on explaining to a child how they had felt about misbehavior, 27% had acquired other management skills to deal with misbehavior. Of the 20% who had left it up to the child to learn from experience, 7% had learnt other means of dealing with misbehavior. There was also a 20% improvement on those parents who had managed misbehavior by smacking the child. An improvement had also been found in the category of parents who had used different methods of managing misbehavior in that there was an addition of 44%, respondents as post-intervention findings showed that 57% of the parents had attained an ability to apply objective judgement to different situations of child misbehavior. This style of handling misbehavior tended to reduce strains in parenting responsibility.

TABLE 29 - PRE-INTERVENTION RESPONSE ON SOURCES EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

SOURCE	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	%
Spouse	6	40
Former spouse	2	13
Inlaws/parents	3	20
Friends	2	13
Others	2	13
TOTAL	15	100

40% of the respondents stated that they had confided in their spouses for emotional

support. The findings showed that more than half the respondents did not provide each other with emotional support in childrearing problems. This could be due to the fact that each felt that he/she had the sole responsibility towards `his' or `her' children. Only 13% of the respondents had consulted their former spouses for encouragement when they encountered childrearing difficulties. This figure showed that former spouses rarely ever consulted each other, even in matters that affect their children. Children whose parents rarely supported each other were likely to manifest behavioral problems due to a stressful family atmosphere. 20% stated that they got guidance and advice on childrearing matters from their elderly parents. This shows that elderly parents are an important support system in providing emotional support and guidance on childrearing challenges.

It was noted that of the 20% of the respondents who did receive emotional support on childrearing matters 13% were married to widowers. This supports an investigation conducted by Bell (1979) which revealed that widowers receive more support when they remarry than widows.

13% of the respondents sought emotional support from their friends. It confirmed an investigation conducted by Rip (1984) who found that after divorce both partners lost their friends and had to build new relationships. He also found that it was not easy for divorcees to establish new friendships since for a long time they had shared the same friends and had only interacted with a specific circle of friends.

13% of the respondents stated that they had sought emotional support from other sources. It was observed that these were religious parents who other than depending on support from their families and friends, also looked upon God to provide them with guidance on child upbringing.

TABLE 30   POST-INTERVENTION RESPONSE ON SOURCES OF EMOTIONAL
SUPPORT

SOURCE	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	%
Spouse	8	53
Former spouse	2	13
Inlaws	1	7
Friends	3	20
Others	1	7
TOTAL	15	100

Post-intervention findings revealed an improvement between parents and stepparents in that 53% stated that they got emotional support from their spouses. Initially only 40% of the respondents had indicated that they had such support. It was found that there had been no improvement in communication between remarried spouses and their former spouses. Apparently they had been unable to consult each other on matters affecting children due to continued strife, and unresolved personal mourning.

20% of the respondents stated that they had friends to   turn to for emotional support when they encountered conflict with their children (7% improvement). They had established new friendships. It was noted that the experience of participating in the parenting programme had taught some members to share childrearing problems, and this had resulted in the establishment of friendship after the training had ended.

TABLE 31.   PRE-INTERVENTION RESPONSE ON SOURCES OF FINANCIAL
SUPPORT.

SOURCE	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	%
Spouse	7	47
Former spouse	3	20
Inlaws	3	20
Others	2	13
TOTAL	15	100

In 47% of the families, remarried spouses support each other financially, while only 20%
of the respondents received financial support from their former spouses. It meant that they do
not receive financial support from their present spouses. The custodial parent remains the sole
provider. This has a potential for creating conflict between the remarried spouses, and
children. 20% of the respondents received financial support from their inlaws or their elderly
parents, while 13% of the respondents received financial assistance from other sources.

TABLE 32   POST-INTERVENTION RESPONSE ON SOURCES OF FINANCIAL
SUPPORT

SOURCE	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	%
Spouse	9	60
Former spouse	3	20
Inlaws	2	13
Others	1	7
TOTAL	15	100

Post-intervention data had revealed that 60% of the respondents received financial support
from their present spouses. (There is a 13% improvement as compared to the 47%). 20% of
the respondents received financial support from their former spouses. It revealed the
difficulty which the custodial parents encountered in securing child support payments from
their former spouses.

4.3 CONCLUSIONS

In this study, two age groups were over-represented (36-40, and 41-45 years) more than other age groups. They had divorced or become bereaved in their late 30's which suggested that they had been married for at least 10 years. They had adolescent children, and were still young to remarry. When they remarried they were faced with double challenges i.e. attaining personal adjustment and attending to children's developmental needs. This had increased chances that remarried parents who fall within the above-mentioned categories would experience personal and relationship problems, hence their over-representation in the study.

33% of the families had been affected by the migratory labour system. This meant that many of the children had been raised by `conditional' single parents. Of these families, 27% were young stepmothers who had no childrearing experience. This then accounted for their inadequate parenting.

The widowed, like the divorced go through a period of trauma, but their trauma is entirely different. For widows or widowers there are customs and rituals which are established to help them during the crisis. Louw (1992) found that the community, friends and relatives express sympathy toward the widowed family, and they also offer a helping hand to sustain them through the crisis. Divorce is a private sorrow. There are no clear guidelines on how friends and relatives could provide emotional and material support during and after divorce. They do not know whether the divorced person is grieved or relieved. Lack of an effective support system accounts for adjustment problems during the crisis, and future relationships.

CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND
RECOMMENDATIONS

5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this chapter is to review the findings of the study, draw conclusions and make recommendations. Richard & Grinnell (1993) stated that in drawing conclusions about the study, the researcher should indicate the following:-

- an assessment of change in the dependent variable as caused by the independent variable;

- show the extent to which the study accomplished its purpose as developed in the formulation of the research hypotheses;

- Implications of the study. It should be clear as to what the study means to professionals, and what is required of them; and

- if there is a need for further research on the subject, this should be shown in the study's conclusion. The researcher should suggest whether the same research methods or other research designs should be utilized in follow up studies.

5.2 RE-STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES

Objectives of the study were the following:

- To do a literature review on contemporary problems and their contribution to family disorganization;

- To use an educational approach to help parents know and understand their children's needs;

- To equip parents and stepparents with effective parenting skills, and

- To encourage parents to support one another through sharing their childrearing experiences.

The first objective which is a brief review of literature was achieved. From literature the following were deduced:

- That South Africa's past oppressive laws are accountable for some problems in many black families e.g. power reversal between youths and parents, lawlessness, disrespect, etc.;

- That parent - youth conflict is common during the adolescence stage because the adolescent is struggling to cope with emotional, social and physical changes;

- That family violence usually leads to family breakdown which affects children. Parents who do not experience a satisfactory marital relationship cannot be effective parents.

- Divorce and remarriage pose many challenges for parents and children. Successful coping depends on many factors, such as cooperation between former spouses, and availability of a network of support systems.

Findings of the study revealed that the second objective which is to help parents to know and understand their children's needs has been achieved. This has been shown by comparing scores in Table 17, and Table 18, which indicate that the parents had learnt that children need to be consulted in certain issues; while Table 19 and 20 indicated that parents had learnt that their children need to be listened to and to be taken seriously. The respondents in this study had also learnt why children sometimes misbehave (See Table 25 and Table 26).

The third objective which was to equip parents with effective parenting skills was also achieved, Table 15 and Table 16 showed that parents had learnt to be approachable. They had acquired better parenting styles. Table 21 and Table 22 revealed that they had also learnt conflict resolution skills.

The objective of encouraging parents to support one another through sharing childrearing experiences was also achieved. 20% of the respondents succeeded in establishing new friendships with other parents who had attended the parenting programme.

5.3 RE-STATEMENT OF THE HYPOTHESES

The study's hypotheses were that:

-       An effective parenting programme can promote a better relationship between parents and stepparents; and

-       Better child management can occur after adults were subjected to an effective parenting programme.

Both hypotheses were supported by the findings. Relationships have been established between the dependent and independent variables as was predicted in the hypotheses.

With regard to the first hypothesis which predicted a relationship between attendance of a parenting programme and improvement of relationship between parents and stepparents, the findings confirmed this as indicated in Table 9 and Table 10. Respondents indicated that they had learnt to make rules together and to enforce them together (53%).

Better child management skills were noted after parents had attended the parenting programme. In table 13 and Table 14 it was revealed that parents realized the need to subject their children to similar rules (80%). Furthermore, In table 23 and Table 24 it was shown that the parents had learnt effective ways of managing children's misbehavior.

5.4 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In Chapter 2, the literature study portrayed how various contemporary problems affect family life i.e. the past political system, unemployment, family violence, family breakdown, and remarriage.

The political struggle from the 70s which spread into the 80s involved participation by

youth. The political struggles was mainly characterized by political violence, disobedience, and general lawlessness. Violence became a legitimate measure of expressing dissatisfaction. Involvement in political violence or witnessing it, could be assumed to have affected many people's orientation and their value system.

The unemployment rate continues to rise, and findings showed that it is between 45% and 60% in some communities. Such a large number of unemployed people cannot be absorbed in formal employment. Employment-creating strategies have to be found in order to address this problem.

The continued occurrence of family violence, and minimal intervention by the helping professionals and other organizations cause the family to be an unsafe place to live in.

The findings confirmed that remarriage constituted 47% of all marriages. All these remarriages involved children from previous marriages. In each household there was a preadolescent or an adolescent. Parent-youth conflict is more common during adolescence. In remarried families parent-youth conflict is more frequent due to lack of a common family background.

Chapter 3, (i.e. the parenting programme), it was observed that some participants who were defensive in joint-family counselling sessions had learnt to acknowledge their weaknesses as parents. Sharing experiences with others had taught them to adopt a better perspective in dealing with childrearing challenges.

The group environment had provided them with security and reassurance to discuss and learn from others without fear of being judged, as it is often the case in the joint-family counselling sessions wherein family members focus on finding fault with each other.

During data collection (in chapter 4) it was found that 33% of the families were still affected by the migratory labour system. This implies that they come home only during holidays. As a result, potential participants who could have benefited from the parenting programme, had failed to attend. Furthermore it was found that the 33% of the parents who were employed in the urban areas were men. Many households were managed by stepmothers who are left behind by migrant labourers (husbands) to bring up the children by themselves. The task of bringing up children is a challenging task even in intact families. Stepparenting, too is

problematic especially when the natural parent is away.

Only 13% of the respondents indicated that they had contact and could communicate with their former spouses. It showed that many former spouses continued to experience a strained relationship. Tension between them affected the children and created adjustment problems for them when parents remarried; hence the complex relationship problems between parents, children and stepparents.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS ON FINDINGS

The study's findings revealed how relationships and family life were affected by various contemporary problems. As a result the recommendations (stated below) aimed at finding ways to counteract those effects:

5.5.1 STRENGTHENING FAMILY LIFE

On the basis of the findings, it could be assumed that the family is weakened from performing its basic functions; Duvall & Miller (1985) contend that the family is an institution which carries out tasks such as socialization, provision of security, giving its members a sense of continuity and belonging, providing support, etc. The family can be empowered to function better through the attainment of good relationship and communication among family members. Family empowerment can be attained through the following ways:

5.5.1.1 PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

These are programmes which aim at empowering parents with effective parenting skills. In these programmes parents are taught to understand their children's needs, stages of development and challenges in each stage.

Parents should be well - informed about children's rights, and their own rights, as such knowledge improves communication between parents and children.

5.5.1.2 RESTORATION OF CHILDHOOD

It implies that children should be allowed to grow up in an environment which is conducive to normal childhood. Childhood can be restored through the provision of adequate educational and recreational facilities. They should be made aware that learning is a priority. They should be provided with basic needs such as a decent home, adequate food, clothing, and access to medical facilities. Furthermore, they should be protected from all forms of abuse.

5.5.1.3 PSYCHOLOGICAL REPARATION

Involvement of children and youth in political or criminal violence, may not be assumed to have gone without negative psychological effects. Violence was used as a legitimate conflict resolution strategy, which in other instances assisted them to get what they wanted.

It is necessary that different organisations in South Africa should embark on psychological reparation programmes to assist victims and survivors of violence. Among other issues that should be addressed, they should inculcate in them an acceptable value system. They should learn to understand, tolerate and accommodate others. Furthermore they should learn that violence, defiance, disrespect and general lawlessness are no longer legitimate measures of expressing dissatisfaction.

5.5.1.4 LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

Life skills education programmes should develop youth, help them think positively, and understand themselves and others. Hopson & Scally (1988) and Dougan (1986) advocate that goals of life skills education programmes should be to teach the following:

- self-analysis and building a positive self-image;
- to differentiate between assertive and aggressive behaviors;
- effective communication skills;
- conflict resolution skills;
- sexuality education i.e. learning an appropriate attitude about sexual facts;
- career guidance - they should be provided with information on various careers, and also be assisted on ways of securing financial assistance for tertiary education;

It is further recommended that life skills training should be part of school curricula so that all students can benefit. Organizations such as churches, community organisations, women's clubs, youth clubs, etc, may also entrench it in their programmes.

5.5.2 EMPLOYMENT CREATING STRATEGIES

The problem of unemployment in South Africa has reached alarming proportions, and it affects family life negatively. The unemployed, the government, the business community and other relevant organizations should make concerted effort to identify employment - creating strategies. Snyman (1993) proposed that poverty and unemployment could be addressed through;

5.5.2.1 SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

The unemployed who have business skills should be assisted to start their own businesses. Financial institutions should make available small loans for those who need to buy materials and equipment to start small businesses.

5.5.2.2 SELF-HELP AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Self-help and social development programmes require that a small group of the unemployed should work together as a cooperative e.g. on vegetable gardens. They could produce food for their families and sell surplus products in order to generate income.

5.5.2.3 BUSINESS TRAINING SKILLS

The unemployed usually lack skills necessary for securing employment. Welfare agencies need to impart knowledge and marketable skills to the unemployed. This would boost their self-confidence and increase chances of securing employment.

5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The study's research methodology focused on a group of 15 families, i.e. a one-group design in which 15 adults participated in the parenting programme. While the programme had a

remarkable impact of improving family relationships on the 15 sample families, the study however left some questions unanswered. The researcher suggests a need for more research on the subject, and thus recommends the following:

5.6.1 EXPERIMENTAL RESEARCH

It should consist of two groups of parents who experience parent-child conflict in remarried families. The first group would be a control group which receives treatment through the direct method with individuals only, while the experimental group should be exposed to both the direct method with individuals as well as the indirect method with groups. Due to the introduction of group therapy in the experimental group, the researcher would be able to conclude about the effectiveness of each method in addressing parent-youth problems, needs and challenges.

5.6.2 EVALUATIVE RESEARCH

A parenting programme should run concurrently with youth life skills training. It is assumed that since many children who manifest relationship problems with parents are adolescents, life skills training would teach them interpersonal skills. The researcher would evaluate how a parenting programme and life skills training could empower each group with knowledge of resolving problems.

5.7 ROLE IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORKERS

Remarriage of one or both spouses results in complex family relationships. The remarried spouses may have two or three sets of children i.e. `his', `hers', `ours'. Children, too may have two or three sets of grandparents. Due to the complexity of family relationships and for effective service rendering to these families, social workers should have knowledge of the following:

- knowledge on children's reactional behaviors to divorce or bereavement;
- Implications of remarriage on spouses and children; and
- Significance of former ties on the remarried families i.e. former spouses and former in-laws.

5.7.2 GROUP THERAPY AS A METHOD

Group therapy as a method of rendering service is also relevant in the treatment of poor parent or stepparent-child relationship in that:

- Individuals learn a great deal by hearing how others handle their problems;
- Successful learning depends on the interaction between group members themselves, and the worker; and
- Sharing of childrearing experiences make parents realize that they are not alone. They learn that other parents too have similar problems. It gives them hope and motivation to try even harder to find solutions to their problems.

The above remarks on the direct and indirect methods of therapy are not meant to discredit one method over the other. The researcher wishes to emphasize that both methods complement one another. Clients should not be denied benefits of the group therapy method due to the social workers' indifferent attitude towards it. Hepworth & Larsen (1994) emphasized that to be of therapeutic value, social workers should be armed with skills for providing maximum service at micro, mezzo and macro levels.

5.8. CONCLUSIONS

The study attempted to dispel some myths which surround the problem of poor parent - child relationships, especially in remarried families. The problem of poor parent - child relationship is multifaceted. Many factors which impinge upon individuals' lives influence how they relate towards one another. Changes in societal values, personal and developmental needs, an individual's capacity to cope with crises, availability of an effective support system account for some reactional/behavioral problems.

ANNEXURE A

AN INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR THE PARENTING PROGRAMME

1.   INSTRUCTIONS

(a)   Read all questions carefully

(b)   Mark your answers with an X where applicable.

(c)   There is no right or wrong answer.

(d)   All information will be kept confidential

(e)   Answer all questions

1.   How old are you?

2.   What is your marital status?

2.1 Single	
2.2 Married	
2.3 Divorced	
2.4. Widowed	
2.5 Remarried	
2.6 Cohabitation	
2.7 Separated	

3.   What is the highest standard passed?

4.   What is your occupation?

5   In which household type do you belong?

5.1 Stepfather-stepmother household	
5.2 Stepmother household	
5.3 Stepfather household	

6.   Classify children in terms of `his', `ours', and `hers'

Λ

7. How old is the problematic child in the family?

8. Who formulates discipline for children in the family?

8.1 Father and stepmother	
8.2 Father	
8.3 Mother	

9. Who keeps discipline in the family?

9.1 Father	
9.2 Father	
9.3 Mother	
9.4 Mother and stepfather	

10. Are there separate rules for boys and girls in the family?

10.1 Yes	
10.2 No	

11. Which of the following defines your parenting style?

11.1 Authoritative	
11.2 Permissive	
11.3 Authoritarian	

12. Do you give a child a chance to express feelings?

12.1 Never	
12.2 Occasionally	
12.3 Sometimes	
12.4 Always	

13. Do you invite a child's opinion in matters affecting his/her life?

13.1 Never	
13.2 Occasionally	
13.3 Sometimes	
13.4 Always	

14.   Do you talk it over when you experience conflict with a child?

14.1 Never	
14.2 Occasionally	
14.3 Sometimes	
14.4 Always	

15.   Which of the following are your typical parenting challenges?

15.1 Aggressive	
15.2 Coming home late	
15.3 Disobedience	
15.4 Neglecting chores	
15.5 Alcohol and drug abuse	
15.6 Sexually active	
15.7 Stealing	
15.8 Other, please specify	

16.   How do you interpret a child's misbehavior?

16.1 Testing behavior	
16.2 Draw attention	
16.3 Escape from certain frustrations	
16.4 All of the above	
16.5 Other, please specify	

17.   What do you do when confronted with a child's misbehavior?

17.1 Send a strong "I-message"	
17.2 Let results take course	
17.3 Smack the child	
17.4 All of the above	

18. Who do you turn to for emotional support when you experience a crisis in childrearing?

18.1 Spouse	
18.2 Former spouses	
18.3 Inlaws	
18.4 Friends	
18.5 Other, please specify	

19. Who do you turn to for financial support?

19.1 Spouse	
19.2 Former spouse	
19.3 Inlaws	
19.4 Other, please specify	

ANNEXURE B

A SUMMARY OF THE PARENTING PROGRAMME

SESSION 1

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE SESSION

The purpose of the session was to:

- introduce group members to one another
- formulate the contract
- discuss changes and challenges facing parents.

1.2 BRAINSTORMING

Group members brainstormed and discussed on:

- Children's competition for love
- Financial challenges
- Generation gap
- Household chores

1.3 INPUT

The researcher highlighted the following parenting challenges

- Personality make-up
- Children's age and developmental needs
- The need for effective communication

1.4 HOMEWORK

Group members were assigned a task to consciously observe issues that made them experience misunderstanding with their children, and to analyse how such issues posed challenges to them as parents.

1.5 EVALUATION

SESSION 2

2.1 PURPOSE OF THE SESSION

The purpose of the session was to:

- discuss feedback of the previous homework; and
- discuss factors that influence children's behavior

2.2 FEEDBACK AND DISCUSSION

Group members again discussed about:

- Financial challenges and its impact on parent - child relationship
- The difficulty of giving a child access to the family's financial information.

2.3 INPUT

The following facts were highlighted:

- Spouses should agree on the extent to which a child may be given access to financial information.
- They should consider to involve an older child whose demands are more than what they can afford.

2.4 BRAINSTORMING

The group members brainstormed on factors which influence a child's behavior. They shared the following ideas

- family conflict
- children's interpretation of parents' separation.

2.5   INPUT

The researcher highlighted the following factors which influence a child's behavior:

- Personality factors
- Birth order
- Gender awareness
- Major life experiences
- Stage of development

2.6   HOMEWORK

Group members were assigned a task to identify ways in which a child who experienced parents' separation could be assisted to attain better adjustment.

2.7   EVALUATION

SESSION 3

3.1   PURPOSE OF THE SESSION

The purpose of the session was to:

- discuss feedback of the task assigned to group members in session no. 2; and
- watch a video entitled "You are still Mum and Dad" produced for the New Zealand Family Courts Association.

3.2   FEEDBACK AND DISCUSSION

Participants identified the following aspects as ways in which a child who experienced parents' separation/ divorce could be assisted to attain better adjustment.

- Reassurance that the child is loved,
- Maintenance of an effective communication pattern
- Parents' recovery from the crisis
- A child's access and visits to the non-custodial parent.

3.3   INPUT

The researcher highlighted that a child can attain better adjustment when;

- Parents maintain a caring and loving relationship
- Parents spend quality time with each child

3.4   VIEWING

Group members watched the video entitled "You are still Mum and Dad". The video emphasized the needs and emotions experienced by children when their parents separate or divorce.

3.5   HOMEWORK

Participants were assigned a task to identify factors that hinder adjustment of a remarried family.

SESSION 4

4.1   PURPOSE OF THE SESSION

The purpose of the session was to:

- discuss factors that hinder adjustment of a remarried family

4.2   FEEDBACK AND DISCUSSION

Participants highlighted the following issues;

- child maintenance
- Reference and identity problems
- Sibling rivalry and competition
- Discriminatory treatment of children
- Problems caused by former in-laws

4.3   INPUT

The researcher explained the following issues in order to help participants understand their concerns better:

- child maintenance
- Implications of remarriage on children
- Children's reactional behaviors
- Effective parenting in remarried families
- Former in-laws relationship

4.4   HOMEWORK

Participants were assigned a task to identify discipline problems with their children.

4.5   EVALUATION

SESSION 5

5.1   PURPOSE OF THE SESSION

The purpose of the session was to;

- discuss feedback on discipline matters.
- summarize and close-up

5.2   FEEDBACK AND DISCUSSION

Participants identified the following discipline problems with their children:

- poor school grades;
- neglecting routine responsibilities by the child;
- misuse of the telephone by children.

5.3 INPUT

The researcher applied with the participants the discipline model adopted from Landman (1989) on how to work out discipline problems.

5.4 GENERAL COMMENTS

Participants made general comments on the following:
- child development
- physical punishment

5.5 INPUT

The researcher explained the following issues:
- Child development, needs and challenges for the child and parents
- Implications for physical punishment.

5.6 EVALUATION

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