An interceptive child-discipline progression model (ICdP) for child protection developed from parents' conceptualization of discipline

Tapiwanashe G. SIMANGO and Itai H. MAFA

ABSTRACT

Child protection is a crucial aspect of social work practice worldwide. Despite efforts to ensure a safe environment for children's development, child abuse in various forms continues to increase. One factor contributing to this issue is the way parents discipline their children. To better understand parents' disciplinary choices, the study was conducted using a qualitative approach with an Afrikology design. The study involved 24 participants, including 20 parents and four key informants, who were interviewed using an interview guide. The results showed that parents view discipline as a relational, punishment, modeling, mannerism, process, and skills-set. These perceptions influence the disciplinary methods used by parents, and understanding this thinking process can help inform child protection policies and interventions. To promote positive disciplinary practices, the researchers proposed an Interceptive Child-Discipline Progressive Model (ICdP), which used the 'dare' concept through the Delphi panel method for model development. This model encourages self-reflection during disciplinary interventions to identify and intercept negative ideas and notions perceived as a discipline before enactment to protect children from abuse under the pretext of discipline.

KEY TERMS: *child discipline; child protection; interceptive child-discipline progression model; child rights; punishment; social work*

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INTRODUCTION

The study sought to understand how discipline was construed by parents in Zimbabwe to inform interventions at micro, meso, and macro levels of interaction. The findings were then used to develop a model which intercepts any negative thoughts before enactment as disciplinary methods. This was done in view of children's rights to understand how parents' understanding of discipline can inform their choice of disciplinary methods either positively or negatively. Negative disciplinary practices can lead to child abuse and child rights violations which usually go unchecked and remain unknown. Growing concerns about positive parenting and the need to move towards that orientation are very pronounced in contemporary society. As such, the drive for the study emanated from the need to find solutions that are in harmony with the context divorced from the contestations that are pronounced in the available literature on positive parenting and disciplinary practices. Thus, the study progressed in harmony with a multi-dimensional child protection focus, informed by evidence from varied facets to provide an indigenous model suited for the global context as well as to inform policy.

BACKGROUND

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) offers a comprehensive framework for child discipline from a human rights-based perspective. It requires its member states to safeguard children through legislation and sound administrative systems (Simango and Mafa, 2022). The UNCRC also outlines the responsibilities of state parties in Articles 3, 6, 19, 28(1)(e), 28(2), 37, 40, and 4. Regionally, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children also has provisions for children's rights in Section 1 through Articles 1 to 31. On child discipline, it is very elaborate in provision of Article 1 (3), Article 4, Article 5, Article 10, Article 12, Article 13, Article 15, Articles 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 27, 28, 29 and 30. It provides a culturally-oriented framework of what constitutes child discipline, as well as the obligations of both the parent and the child. Despite these provisions, cases of child abuse and violations of children's rights continue to be reported in Zimbabwe. Of particular concern are those that occur under the guise of discipline, as they are often overlooked and go unreported.

Child-rearing, including child discipline, is a crucial aspect of any culture, according to UNICEF (2010). Therefore, the family is a vital disciplinary entity that shapes children's character with socially accepted norms (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2019). Article 5 of the UNCRC (1989) highlights the essential role that parents and other caregivers play in children's development. Therefore, it is necessary to understand their views on discipline, as these influence their parenting practices and choice of disciplinary methods. This understanding can contribute to indigenous frameworks on positive parenting practices that prevent child abuse under the guise of child discipline. This warranted the need to establish and understand the parenting practices used in Zimbabwe during the disciplinary process and their effect on children's rights (Simango & Mafa, 2022).

Problem statement

While Zimbabwe's child protection system is robust, unfortunately, high rates of child abuse persist in various forms. Particularly troubling are instances of child rights violations committed under the guise of disciplinary action. Caregivers have caused children serious harm, including injuries, impairments, and even death. Simango and Mafa (2022) noted that most of this violence against children happens at home, and there is limited knowledge of the disciplinary methods parents use in Zimbabwe. As a result, cases of abuse in the home are often overlooked and underreported to child protection services, despite the harmful effects on child development (UNICEF, 2016). To shed light on this issue and provide some insight into why it persists, this study aimed to explore parents' understanding of discipline. The research found a gap in the literature that focuses on how parents perceive discipline, which may influence their disciplinary practices and preferences. Someone studies explored child abuse, the use of corporal punishment in schools, and indigenous disciplinary practices in Zimbabwe (Mugabe & Maposa 2013; Gudyanga, Mbengo & Wadesango 2014; UNICEF, 2016, Gwenzi et al., 2021; Muzingili & Chikoko, 2019; Mavuka & Chikwaiwa, 2022, Simango & Mafa, 2022). Little attention has been given to parents' understanding of discipline. This lack of understanding may contribute to the continued rise in child abuse cases related to disciplinary issues. Therefore, this study aims to explore parents' perceptions of discipline and offer solutions for social workers to intervene and prevent negative parenting practices that perpetuate child abuse in the form of discipline.

METHODOLOGY

The section covers information on the methodology employed for the study and model development respectively.

Specific research question

What are parents' understanding of discipline in Zimbabwe?

Methodological issues

The study was underpinned by the social constructivist paradigm which allows participants to construe meaning from their reality. The study used a qualitative approach guided by the Afrikology design, a design that allowed the researchers to pay closer attention to the interpretation of the child discipline phenomenon from an African point of view (Chilisa et al., 2017). Chimanimani District was considered appropriate for this study because it has a polarized urban and rural divide in the district, which made it possible to gain insight into both traditional and contemporary conceptualization of discipline.

Study's selection criteria and sample size

The research aimed to gain insights into how parents in the Chimanimani district understand discipline. A total of 20 parents were selected based on the criteria of being married or single parents with children under the age of eighteen. The participants were chosen from Nyanyadzi, Chikwizi, and Mhakwe villages in Chimanimani, which fall under the chieftaincy of Chief Muusha (Ward 8) and Chief Mutambara (Ward 9). Purposive sampling was used to ensure that the desired characteristics were met. In addition, the study included four key informants: a social worker, a school principal, a traditional healer, and a pastor. The social worker had first-hand experience in dealing with child abuse cases, while the school principal had experience in disciplinary issues with pupils and how parents dealt with these in the home environment. The traditional healer had inter-generational knowledge of Ndau Child rearing traditional practices which incorporate the disciplinary function of parents, and the pastor was included to understand how Christianity shapes and contributes towards what parents construct and perceive as discipline. Unfortunately, traditional leaders were not included due to other commitments.

Research methods and tools

A total of twenty (20) interviews were conducted over a period of three (3) weeks to gather data. The interviews were conducted in the local language called ChiNdau, which the researchers were also familiar with. In addition, four (4) key informant interviews were conducted over the phone using a different interview schedule with open-ended questions and probing areas.

Data analysis

In this study, data were analyzed using thematic analysis based on the steps proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The researchers chose to familiarize themselves with the data by manually transcribing the recorded interviews, instead of following Braun and Clarke's suggestion to have someone else transcribe the data. This decision was made because the available transcribers lacked context and at times failed to accurately capture the meaning of the words. Despite the challenges, the researchers chose to transcribe the interviews themselves to preserve the credibility of the data. They believed that their understanding of the context and language would result in a more accurate transcription. First, initial impressions were noted while reviewing the material. From there, codes were generated through open-coding open coding since there were no pre-existing codes. To ensure coherence and distinctness, the themes identified during the initial coding were reviewed and modified. Data relevant to each theme was manually gathered from transcribed interviews and copied into a worksheet (Bree & Gallagher, 2016). The themes were then defined and analyzed, as presented in the findings and discussion. Unfortunately, the participants were unable to be involved in the data analysis, which could limit the data's validation post-transcription.

Model development methodology

Our model was carefully crafted using the Delphi panel technique, which relies on the collective expertise of panel members to make informed predictions. This technique is rooted in Hegelian dialectic principles of thesis, antithesis, synthesis, and consensus, making it highly applicable in the African context, where similar methods such as the 'Dare', a Shona term for a gathering place for discussion and a tribunal of ideas, is utilized. To create this model, we assembled a team of seven child protection experts from academic and practical backgrounds. The panel consisted of three representatives from the Department of Social Development, a district schools inspector from the Ministry of Education, an officer with Child Line, a lecturer from the Midlands State University School of Social Work, and a traditional healer with expertise on Ndau child-rearing practices. While some members of the panel chose to remain anonymous, each played a crucial role in developing our model.

Furthermore, the study's results revealed valuable insights into parents' perceptions of discipline and the methods they employ. To ensure that the proposed model aligns with established child disciplinary practices, the findings were compared against various legal instruments, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children, the African Charter on the Rights of Children, the Constitution of Zimbabwe, and the Children's Act. This comparison helped to inform the proposed model and guide its development. The model was presented to a panel of social work practitioners, who provided feedback and recommendations. This feedback included

suggestions to expand part 3 of the model on the Review and Personal Reflection stage. The panel also offered corrections and recommendations related to the model's terminology and flow. All feedback was carefully considered, and the proposed model was revised and shared back with the panel until a consensus was reached. This collaborative process ultimately led to the finalization of the proposed model.

Ethical considerations

The study was undertaken in full cognizance of the COVID-19 pandemic and as such, observed the no-principle harm to participants by observing COVID-19 protocols. Thus, key informant interviews were conducted using the telephone to avoid contact. The study also sought participant's voluntary participation through consent and upheld confidentiality as well as anonymity of participants

FINDINGS

The study established that there is a consensus amongst parents that discipline is an ongoing process guided by a love which involves the use of some form of methods (both physical and non-physical) to yield culturally-desired behavior in children though variated forms and magnitudes. Though there was an agreed standpoint of discipline being a process, the means to this process were pluralistic. Some parents understood discipline as a way of conducting oneself within acceptable parameters and others understood it to be a relationship based on the process between parents and children. Discipline was further perceived as modelling which is not just stated but also a process of learning by observation from significant others. These findings are presented below.

Discipline as a mannerism, process and a skills-set (*Unhu kana kuita zvakanaka indaa yezvinoizwa nemunthu, mukuwo ngezvinokonekwa nemunthu*)

Parents understood and explained discipline as a way of behaving in some accepted manner. The findings also showed that parents understood this way of behaving as a product of the process of discipline that resulted in a child amassing certain skills.

> *Ndaayediscipline ngeyekuita zvinotarisirwa kuburikidza ngemitemo nozvinonga zvabhuyiwa ngekutarwa mundau yaunogara. Teiedzanisa, kana mumhatso medu meizwi haurhye wakaema ukakona kuita sekudero, ndodiscipline yakona*
> *Translated to:*
>
> *It's all about manner acceptable conducting yourself within the set rules and boundaries in a particular area. For example, if we say in this house we do not eat whilst standing and you to do so then that is discipline. (Participant 1, Interview)*
>
> *Discipline zvinoronza kukwanisa kuteedza mitemo pazviro zvinenge zveitarisirwa panguva iyoyo.*
>
> *Translated to:*
>
> *Discipline is the ability to obey rules in a given situation. (Participant 3, Interview)*
>
> *Inosanganisira zvetinotsiura ngemashoko, pamweni kutochaya chaiko kana kufundisa mwana wakona zvinofanira kuizwa. Kuumbiridza mwana ngekumufundisa zvinofanira kuizwazvingaedzaniswa ngemuthi kana weikura. Unoda kusakurirwa ngekudiridzirwa. Ngekudero, ukafundisa mwana zvakanaka unozovawo ngeunhu usingaiti zvemahala.*
>
> *Translated to:*
>
> *This is a process that conjoins verbal reprimand, beating, and training. It is nurturing of a child so that when they are growing up their development can be likened to a tree. As such, if you train a child well in the end you can expect something good to come out of them. (Participant 17, Key informant)*

Evident from the verbatim above is a realization that various concepts underpin the concept of discipline. Nonetheless, the cross-cutting theme among parents is that discipline is perceived as a process with inputs and expected outputs.

Discipline as an output of modelling (*kuita zvakanaka kumburikidza ngekufundiswa*)

According to the observations of parents, children tend to adopt the behavior patterns of significant individuals in their lives. Participants in the study asserted that it is impossible to instill qualities in a child that one does not possess or exhibit. They emphasized that children learn through imitation and use this process to understand appropriate and inappropriate behavior. Consequently, a parent's behavior and actions play a critical role in

disciplining a child, regardless of what is verbally communicated. It was noted that children do not merely listen to verbal instructions but also internalize the behavioral actions of their parents.

> *Kana weida kufundisa munthu kana mwana kuchova motika hazvigone kuti umfundise usizikuenda ndiye kumotika yakona ngekumukombidza iyena kuti zvinoizwa sei. Haungamutwari womubeka mungoro weiti uri kumfundisa motika. Zvatinoiza zvinifanirwa kukombidza zvatinobhuya kuti ndozvinotariswa pamwana unoterera. Zvatinoiza zvinobhuya maningi Kudarika mazwi etinopanga. Translated to:*

> *If you want to teach a person or child to drive a car, it is impossible to teach them without taking them into the car and demonstrating for them. You cannot then, take them into a horse cart and claim you are teaching them to drive a car. Our example and our leadership should demonstrate that we truly mean discipline. Action speaks louder than words. (Participant 4, Interview)*
> *Ana angu anoningira kwendiri kuti ndivaratidze zvekuita. Handingavabhuyiri kuti vasaangarara inini ngeiita zvechijoki joki.Vanongotoredzera zvona izvozvo.*
> *Translated to mean:*
> *My children look up to me for a good example. I cannot tell them to be well-behaved when I behave like a prostitute. They will copy that. (Participant 5, Interview)*
> *Ndaa yeunhu hweana inokombidza mashoko anopangwa ngemubereki, zvinoizwa nemubereki, ngehunhu hwavo mumwana.*
> *Translated to:*
> *Child discipline is a reflection of the parent's words, actions, and behavior toward the child. (Participant 14, Key informant)*

The findings suggest that discipline is a continuous process. It can be argued that modelling is not spontaneous but, rather gradual and evolves from one stage to another until the child can be able to act within the desirable.

Discipline as relational *(ukama hunodarika kupanga chete)*

The study found out that parents conceptualized discipline as an output of relations which is relationship-based. Participants highlighted that the process of discipline is situated within a relationship and also the disciplinary process is affected by the state of the parent-child relations. Some parents have great whilst others have broken relationships with their children which is reflected in the discipline process. Parents noted that behind each disciplinary action was an element of love and nurturance focused on bringing the best out of children. After the process of disciplining the child, there was still a need to maintain positive parent-child relations.

> *Kana teibhuya ngevana vedu kunyanya Mukunda wedu, andu akawanda anoshamisika ngeukam hwedu. Tineukama hwepedo Hapana chakafishika pakati pedu.*

> *Translated to:*
> *When we talk with our children, especially our daughter, most people are taken aback by the way we interact with our children. We are very close and open to each other. (Participant 11, Interview)*

> *Kwandiri, discipline mukuwo wekumisa ukama ngeana edu kuti vazvisise zvendinoda neizvo ndisingade semubereki. Ndizvona zvimwezvo ngekuzvisisa ana ako kuti asakut'e. Ndakuronzerai kuti mukomana wangu arikuUNiversity usati wapetuka ndakamubhuira kuti wakufanira kuita Shamwari yekuhambidzana ndiyo musikana.Wakakwanisa kundibhuira zvaanothya ininiwo ndikawana nguwa yekumfundisa ngendaa iyona nekumupanga.*
> *Translated to:*
> *For me, discipline is a process of establishing a relationship with your children so that they understand what you as a parent like and do not like. Likewise, it is a process of understanding your children so that they are not fearful of you. I told my boy studying at university before he went to school that you now need to have a girlfriend. He was open to sharing his fears, and within the same discussion as a parent, I was also able to teach and discipline him on the matter. (Participant 18, Interview)*

> *Mukuwo wekudetsera mwana kuti ave ngehunhu kuti muve neukama hwakanaka Husina kuambana.*
> *Translated to*
> *Discipline is a process of helping a child to behave well so that you maintain good relations with them that are non-conflictual. (Participant 26, key informant)*

From the verbatim above, discipline can be perceived within a relational framework that is not only focused on guiding the child or inflicting pain. Parents in the study subscribed to this school of thought, as they noted that

discipline is a process that is not only made manifest through the child's behavior. They argued that it is a reflection of the investment that has been put into the parent-child relationship.

Discipline as punishment *(Kuranga)*

The study found that parents often perceived discipline and punishment as interchangeable, while also recognizing some differences between the two. Both concepts were seen as having the ultimate goal of promoting good behavior. Punishment, specifically, was viewed as a means of enforcing rules and fostering positive behavior in children, albeit through the use of pain or the removal of privileges. Parents praised good behavior and used punishment to discourage negative behavior. As such, punishment was defined by parents as a means of achieving discipline.

> *Kuranga kuneizwe pane munhu unoangarara. Ndeikupai muedzaniso, ndikati handichabhadharire Mukunda wangu mare yechikora ngekuti ndamubata weita zvemaboyfriends, ndirikuite sekudero ngendaa yekuti ndinonga ndeida kuti azwe kurwadzawa kuti yazviizwi nekunzwisisa mrango wekuita zvevakomana uchiri mudoko.*
>
> *Translated to:*
>
> *Punishment is a sanction for wrongdoing. For example, when I decide to stop paying school fees for my daughter after catching her with a boyfriend, I withdraw her fee payment so that she feels the pain and understands the consequences of having a boyfriend at a tender age. (Participant 29, Interview)*
>
> *Kuranga ngezvanoita ngekuda kurwadzisa mundu, kuti kana aching arwadziwa unoita sezvendinonga ndeida. Ndinomboona amweni andu achinyima ana avo zvekurya vabve kuchikora ngendaa yekuti havazi kutsvaira mumbatso vasati vaenda kuchikora.*
> *Translated to:*
> *Punishment is something that I can do by inflicting pain on someone such that after the pain they do as I want. I have seen other people who deprive their children of food after they have been knocked off at school because they failed to sweep the house before attending classes. (Participant 19, Interview)*
>
> *Kuranga kunofambidzana ngemaconsequences akona. Ndosaka meiona kuti hai, mumakanyi ari panapa kana mwana weinga wapetuka kubva kuchikora, umweni unototi wabvisa uniform kwakutotanga kutsvaira kana kuita mamweni Mabasa pambapo ngekuziva kuti ukasaiza kudero haaryi. Saka naizvozvo hakusi kuti mwana unoterera, asi hundu kwekut'a kurangwa. Discpline kuti mwana unoite zvakanaka kwete ngekuti unothya asi kuti unozwisisa zvaari kuiza.*
> *Translated to:*
> *Punishment goes hand-in-hand with consequences. That is why you can see that in some homesteads, when a child return from school immediately after taking off their uniform, they start sweeping or doing household chores because they know that if they do not do so they may not eat. So in this regard, this is not discipline but, rather behaviour induced by the fear of punishment. Discipline is a child doing good not out of fear but, out of understanding the benefits. (Key Informant Interview)*

The findings indicate that parents at some point withdrew certain privileges to sanction good behavior. The punishment used was not only through physical means but also non-physical methods. Parents used deprivation and withdrawal of specific privileges to instill pain.

DISCUSSION

The findings established that parents conceived discipline within three domains: as a mannerism, a process, and skill set. As a mannerism, it may be understood as a way in which one should act as a process of the couture of yielding desirable mannerisms, and as a skill-set associated with certain abilities. It can be argued that these three domains signify the differentiated roles assumed by children during the disciplinary process. As a mannerism, children are viewed as subordinates to adults, subjects who know nothing but rely on external authoritative guidance to master socially acceptable behavior. As a process, children are apprentices to adults who are considered custodians of social morals. The CRC, article 5 records the vital guiding role parents and alternate caregivers play in the nurturing course of children's development. It is within such a process that children's rights can be violated and thus lead to child abuse depending on the method parents choose to achieve this outcome.

As a skills-set skill-set, children are autonomous and viewed as having the ability to act in a certain way. Interestingly, these findings suggest that behavior is situational and up to the child to choose the correct skills-set for the appropriate situation. What they do at home, at school, and whilst playing with their friends could help visualize this proposition. It can be argued that no one necessarily tells a child how to behave in a situation by

they rely on accumulated skills set to behave in a certain way (Chereni & Mugumbate, 2019). This can be an anchorage of advancing positive disciplinary practices that enable children to amass certain skills for personal survival and progression into adulthood.

The findings further highlight that the way a parent construes discipline will shape how they discipline their child. The operant conditioning theory posits that certain responses stimulated towards certain behaviour elicit child behaviour. Thus, rewards and punishments regulate how people will react to environmental cues. The findings have indicated that parents at some point withdrew certain privileges to sanction good behavior. It can be noted that parents assume a grander role over children retaining the autonomy to dispense punishments and rewards. To parents, discipline can then be viewed as an externally facilitated activity that includes the use of external inputs to reach a goal through the use of artifacts. Artifacts are things that are contrived and created by people in the culture. They include every instrumentality, from simple physical tools like a pen, spoon, and table, to the most complicated psychological tools like language, traditions, beliefs, arts, science, and so on (Cole, 1997). From the findings, parents made use of instruments such as beating sticks and cooking sticks. How parents conceptualized discipline had a bearing on their disciplinary practice, in this case, punishment was one of the "artifacts" of discipline used by parents. Thus, punishment as a child disciplinary method infringes upon the rights of the child, hence social work interventions should be oriented towards deconstructing such narratives that escalate to inform disciplinary practices amongst parents.

The findings also pointed to modelling as a salient and dominant theme that was constantly recurrent in the notions of discipline put forward by parents. Through the process of socialization, children therefore learn behavior from their immediate environment. The Ubuntu theory (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2019) also concedes noting that from the *gondora* stage within the *zera* model, more occupational training and learning is expected and mentorship is provisioned for by the relatives such as aunts and uncles assigned these roles thereby shaping behaviour. It can thus be contended that parental behavior and actions may adversely shape and contribute to child discipline. The result of good behavior in children is not only a function of nurturing the child well but also the extent to which a parent presents themselves as a citizen within a society. This manner of thinking by parents can be leveraged to advance child-rights-oriented disciplinary practices that do not harm children.

The findings also suggest that discipline is a process of modeling is not spontaneous but, rather gradual and evolving from one stage to another until the child can able to act within the desirable. The family setup as the primary institution for socialization is a critical disciplinary entity that builds character and molds favorable norms within the society. It may be perceived that the family can be a medium for the process of character refinement or even a perpetrator of violence against children's rights. Modeling does not therefore only yield desirable behavior but, can also reverse mold negative behavior where the significant others might not be of sober mannerisms. Thus, the findings provide insight into disciplinary practices that can also facilitate abuse of children, hence the need to design interventions that correct this line of thought.

The findings also established that discipline can be perceived within a relational framework that is not only focused on guiding the child or inflicting pain. This buttresses Evans (2007) proposes that discipline is creating an environment based on parent-child relationships that encourage positive outcomes while decreasing negative behaviors. Parents in the study subscribed to this school of thought, as they noted that discipline is a process that is not only made manifest through the child's behaviour. They argued that it is a reflection of the investment that has been put into the parent-child relationship. Parents who had a strong relationship with their children noted that they rarely beat them and had fewer incidences of child indiscipline. It can be deduced that, there is a strong relation between parent-child relations and discipline, anchored on the concept of love which underlies any genuine disciplinary action.

According to the study findings, the roles of aunts and uncles had been eroded and parents had to take up the responsibility these persons used to undertake. Changes within the chronosystem have made certain parenting innovations necessary. There seems to be a degeneration of the role the extended family used to play in child-rearing within the African context. Mugumbate and Chereni (2019) also propagate the use of IKS such as employing Ubuntu in dealing with children in social work which empowers them and their families. The theory represents communitarian ideals, communal rationality, spirituality and excellence. Contrary to this, the findings suggest a move from communalism towards individualism even in child disciplinary practices. The availability of alternate socialization structures such as technology and friends made parents participating in the study feel that there was a need to build relationships with their children to understand them better and intervene before they misbehave.

The proposed model: the interceptive child-discipline progression model (ICdP)

The study through its findings developed a model that can be further developed on understanding the progression of child discipline and how social work intervention can be useful at these stages of progression to protect children from violence and abuse, especially within the home environment. The model argues that child discipline is an ongoing process that includes conceptualization, enactment as well as review, and personal reflection. In this progression, social workers as custodians of children through their roles of educators and advocacy can empower

caregivers with mental capacity to intercept negative child disciplinary methods at the thought processing stage (to choose another non-harmful way of discipline) or after enactment (to support the child and caregiver) so that the child is not exposed to further harmful behaviour. The model has three stages detailed below;

Fig 1: The Interceptive Child-discipline Progression model (ICdP)
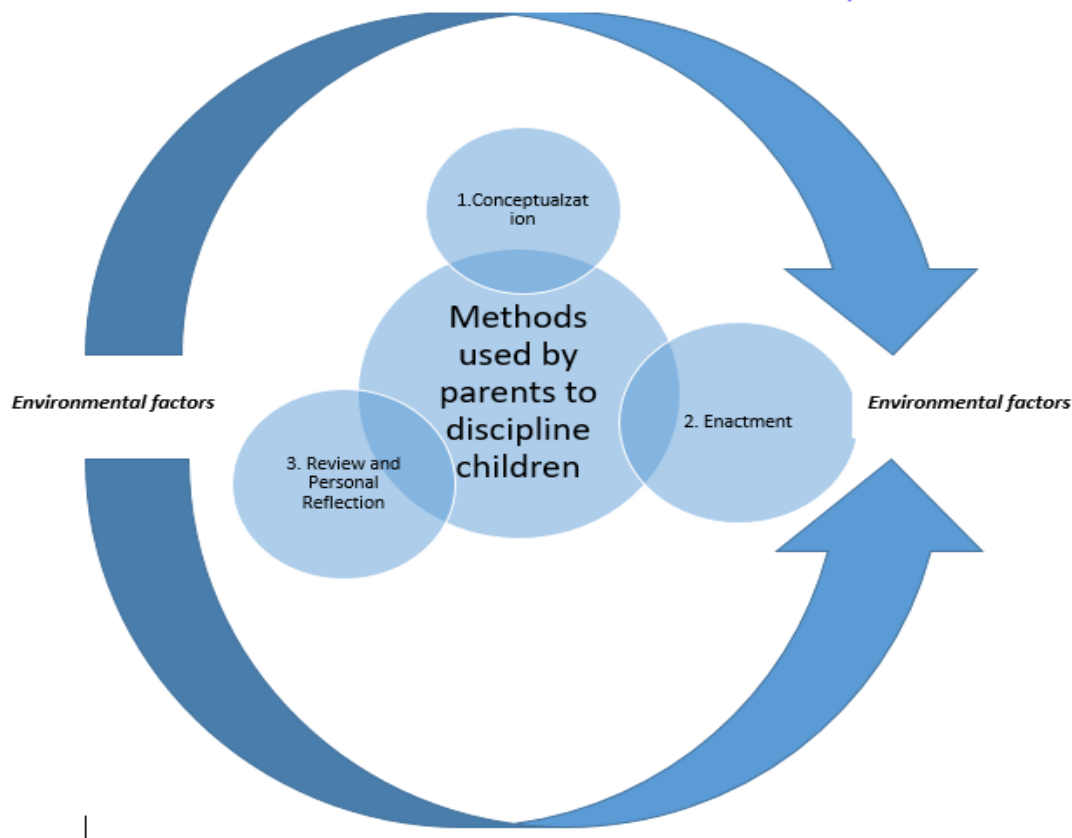
1.   *Conceptualization stage (preventative)*

This stage involves how a guardian or parent perceives and constructs actions constituting as discipline. It is embedded in the thinking process that builds what is thought as ideal in shaping and molding a child to be an adult that is socially adaptable within the means and expectations of society. Importantly, it should be noted that this process of conceptualizing and constructing discipline is not divorced from factors within the environment such as culture, environment and parents' upbringing. The model thus, proposes that social workers can intercept any illogical thinking that can be harmful to children perceived and constructed as discipline before it is actioned. At this stage, primary preventive measures that protect children from abuse which can be an output of disciplinary processes can be effected by intercepting the 'thought' before it is idealized. Possible interventions might include: capacity building and skills enhancement on positive parenting practices (micro level), influencing of, and encouragement of positive parenting attitudes, reorientation, child rights education (meso level), and supportive legal infrastructure on child protection (macro level).

2. *Enactment stage (prevention, treatment, remedial action)*

The actual disciplinary process and all the methods used constitute this stage-*action*. How parents discipline their children and the methods that they choose are the matter of focus. Again, these choices are influenced and underpinned by factors in the context (ecological systems perspective). At the micro level, the parent or guardian's choice of a disciplinary method to use is a function of their own personal lived reality such as their upbringing and childhood. At meso level, how the community defines and views discipline is also affected by the choices that the parent makes to discipline their child. Sources such as religion, school, and neighborhood practices also permeate to the final method of choice. At macro level, the society has an integrated accepted standard way of life (culture) emanating from multiple sources such as domestic and international legal instruments. At this stage, social workers assume a dualistic interceptive role by enacting a remedial role in the form of secondary prevention. An acknowledgment is made that the disciplinary process has already started and a probability child rights violations and abuse might have occurred. During this process, social workers intercept to alleviate the situation

by providing interventions that minimize and mitigate against the further progression of harmful disciplinary practices acting in the best interest of the child. This includes conducting a thorough assessment on the circumstances surrounding the child and establishing any present danger or the possibility of harm emanating from the disciplinary process. Actions might include removing the child from the harmful environment and placing them in a place of safety. Also, due to the dualistic client nature of such a scenario, the parent or guardian would need, to be offered support and rehabilitation services to enable them to undertake positive parenting through non-harmful means.

3. Review and personal reflection stage (ongoing)

This is a fluid stage that is ongoing and cuts across all the stages as it reflects on the consciousness of the guardian and parent before, during, and after disciplining a child. During the conceptualization and enactment stage, review and reflection of thoughts and actions constantly ensue. During this stage, parents and guardians go through their thoughts as well as actions taken whilst disciplining a child and reflect upon them. From the study, parents would always review and reflect on their thought processes as well as the disciplinary method(s) used. As an interception mechanism, social workers can leverage this conscious model to harness key lessons that can be drawn from lived experiences to inform evidence-based and client-related interventions that promote positive child disciplinary methods. It is not only a pathway for generating knowledge but, a means of availing therapy through catharsis of parents' experiences of their thoughts and the disciplinary actions taken. The stage also provides insight into the reciprocal nature of the first two stages which can precede each other. Parents or guardians can discipline their child first (enactment) and reflect on their construction on discipline or vice-versa. Thus, this stage facilitates the understanding of this reciprocal nature and advances for social workers to be flexible to intercept any harmful disciplinary practices in the best interest of the child at any given stage.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study have concluded that the founding base for any practical action is the conceptualization process. This means that the manner in which parents understand and conceive discipline has an adverse effect on the disciplinary methods and practices they will choose and employ. Thus, the authors contend that disciplinary practices are the actioning and manifestation of the conceptualization process. Hence, this can be a pathway that can be explored further to identify and influence robust child protection policies and interventions not only in Zimbabwe but, globally amidst cases of spiking child abuse and child rights violations. Social work as the vanguard of child rights and child protection should be seized with innovations to address existent and emerging child protection issues such as sustainable transdisciplinary research that inspires the development of models. As such, the paper advances for proactive, sustainable, and research based developmental-clinical social work interventions that intercept ideas and notions of discipline before enactment.

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