

## BROODING OVER AFRICAN TRADITIONAL CHILD-CARE IN ZIMBABWE: FROM PRENATAL TO POSTNATAL

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper examined traditional African child rearing styles from prenatal to postnatal focusing on the impact this has on the psychosocial developments of a child's academic performance. In most African countries, during prenatal and postnatal periods, there are many rituals that are observed by the parents, especially the expectant mother. This has a bearing on the psychological and later cognitive development of the child. As a result, there is a paradigm shift taking place from a strictly traditional to a more modern oriented way of rearing children due to the influence of education, media and technology. The majority of families in Zimbabwe now find themselves somewhere along a continuum between the African and Western child rearing styles. In this study, the descriptive survey design was used with questionnaires and interviews as data collection instruments. Findings from this research revealed that, some families want independent, democratic and sometimes laissez-faire ways of raising children while some African cultures prefer submissive children raised under an authoritarian style. Knowledge of African child rearing practices is therefore of paramount importance since it makes teachers of African children sensitive to and aware of some values that have shaped them so as to enhance effective teaching and learning.*

**Keywords:** child-rearing styles, traditional, westernized, authoritarian, authoritative and permissive

### BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Parenting is an activity rooted in one's own childhood experiences from prenatal to post natal, religion, culture, parenting and child rearing styles. Literature published to date examined the effects of child rearing practices and parenting styles on children's outcomes, particularly establishing the benefits to children of authoritative parenting as opposed to the negative outcomes produced by authoritarian and permissive parenting (Demo & Cox, 2000). In their recent publication on the *Plight of Latchkey Children in Zimbabwe*, Ganga and Chinyoka (2013) emphasize the fact that the *child* is the focal point of most family discussions in newspapers, daily news, radios, televisions and many other forms of the media. Chinyoka (2013) also reiterates the fact that the greatest misfortune that can befall a man or a woman is being childless. Therefore, the child remains a vital being for various discourses in academia today. No matter how rich and successful the individual may be, life is miserable, a void and unfulfilled without children.

Mwamwenda (2010) posits that, in some African families, if a woman remains childless for five or six years of marriage, the entire family becomes unhappy and frustrated. Childlessness is a great source of family dysfunction if it is not properly resolved. Since children are highly

valued, most Western couples seek medical intervention and may adopt one or two children through a child adoption agent. Africans may use traditional medicines to bring about conception and exclude any *teratogens* (non-food substances causing birth defects) that may hinder the proper development of the new life (Cole and Cole, 2010). Whilst most extended families may regard children as the perpetuators of good family life, some nuclear families have remained accepting children as ordained privileges from God. Nevertheless, it is the responsibility of the community to see to it that children are raised appropriately from their prenatal to postnatal stages of life.

Durojaiye (1990) and Mwamwenda (2010) concur that child rearing practices are embedded in a *culture*. It is culture that determines the behaviours and expectations surrounding the child's birth, infancy, childhood, adolescence and the way the children will receive parenting up to end of childhood. Mwamwenda goes on to say that Africans know that the parenting period is quite sensitive and that everything possible must be done to protect the life of the human foetus from prenatal to postnatal development.

In agreement, Wenner and Smith (2000) assert that child rearing practices are embedded in a culture and determine to a larger extent, the behaviours and expectations surrounding the child's birth, infancy, childhood, adolescence and the way these children will parent as adults. According to Mazrui (1986) in Mwamwenda (2010) the Africans know that the parental period is a sensitive one and that everything possible must be done to protect the life of the human foetus. Most African pregnant women such as the Baganda, Xhosa and the Shona are expected to take certain traditional medicines from plants, which are intended to protect the foetus and prepare the mother for delivery (Mair, 1965 cited in Darling and Steinberg, 2010).

The Banyankole woman of Western Uganda is made to drink the first milk of a cow that has just calved, which is believed to be very nutritious for the child she is carrying (Ainsworth, 1967). Bullock (1997) cited in Mwamwenda (2010) is of the opinion that during pregnancy, the Shona expectant mother is forbidden to eat anything that is bitter or sour, nor is she allowed to look at anything deformed or ugly lest she gives birth to a child with similar characteristics. In many cultures in sub-Saharan Africa, the practice is for pregnant women to observe food taboos that restrict their consumption of foods that are in fact important to their nutrition and the growth of the foetus. For example, in Zambia, food taboos include fish and eggs and in Namibia, pregnant women are not to eat meat, groundnuts and oranges. The Western also value the prenatal stage, that is, they visit the doctors and they go to ante-natal clinics, some medicine is taken as a way of protecting the foetus. The Western do not have food taboos like Africans hence they eat balanced diets so as to have healthy babies (Holford, 2004). By visiting ante-natal clinics, the infant mortality rate is reduced. Most Africans these days also visit the pre-natal clinics and this has reduced the infant mortality rate (UNICEF, 2007).

During conception, the Wanyakyusa, the Shona, Ndebele and the Xhosa women carry on their usual duties until the baby is born (Mwamwenda, 2010). Munjanja (1998) cited in the UNICEF (2002) and Chinyoka, (2013) study on child care practices in Zimbabwe admits that among some Shona speaking people there is no reduction in workload, particularly of strenuous activity, foetal growth and development may be compromised resulting in low birth weight and premature delivery. The emotional state of the expectant mother is related to the health of the foetus. If an expectant mother is experiencing stress because of fear, rage, anxiety, tension or serious conflict, this may adversely affect the health of the foetus. Among the Africans, wife battering is practiced even on expecting mothers and this affects the foetus. In support of the above, Igaga (2000) posits that, children born to such mothers may be

hyperactive, irritable, and sometimes deformed. They are known to sleep less and to cry more frequently than would normally be expected.

On the other hand, Munjanja (1998) cited in the UNICEF Study on Child Care Practices in Zimbabwe (2002) also admits that, in some communities, pregnancy is a period of special need. The woman's workload is usually reduced, her wishes including diet are indulged, even those of the baby in her womb. This augers well for the baby's development. Given the above scenario, it is evident that some Africans, like the Western, now respect the pregnant women and provisions are made so as to come up with a healthy baby.

Both the traditional and modern Africans make some preparations for the arrival of the newly born baby. Some maternity clothes are purchased for the pregnant mothers to wear. Special clothes for the baby such as napkins and other clothes to keep the baby warm are bought in advance. The differences in these preparations are that the Western purchase these things well before one gives birth while most Africans see it as a taboo to buy clothes before one has given birth. Changes have however been noted to some African families in Zimbabwe, they also make such preparations in advance. Many studies exist that examine parenting styles. This study will only examine Baumrind's (1978) three parenting styles of authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative that are often used in studies investigating parenting styles in relation to diverse child outcome variables, such as academic achievement, self-confidence, aggression, delinquent behavior, and substance abuse. Chinyoka (2013) found that authoritarian and permissive parenting styles were negatively associated with higher grades, whereas the authoritative parenting style was positively associated with higher grades.

It is against this background that these researchers wish to explore how traditional and modern African child rearing practices differ in Zimbabwe.

### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of the study was to determine the modern and traditional African child rearing practices as noted amongst Zimbabwean societies whose childrearing culture seem to resemble both traditional African and a dilution of such culture and the Western child rearing style. An examination of the childrearing styles will be discussed and their impact on the psychosocial development of a child and academic performance.

### **MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION**

Explain how traditional African childrearing practices differ from the modern Westernised ones in Zimbabwe?

The following research questions/sub-problems were formulated to explore the similarities and differences between childrearing practices in Zimbabwe.

1. How do pre and postnatal practices in traditional and modern African societies differ?
2. What are the common childrearing practices within traditional and modern African families?
3. Which practices occur in both categories?
4. How does each parenting style affects the psychosocial development of the child and the academic performance?

### **METHODOLOGY**

The main aim of the study was descriptive and exploratory. One of the advantages is that it allows the researchers to gain understanding of social phenomena from participants' perspectives in their natural settings (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:315).

## **RESEARCH DESIGN**

According to McMillan & Schumacher (2010) a research design refers to the plan and structure of the investigation used to obtain evidence to answer research questions. A good research is therefore not accidental. The study adopted a descriptive survey in order to explore the similarities and differences in the manner in which children are nurtured by various Zimbabwean societies. The survey design was used in this research because it concerns itself with providing rich descriptions of phenomenon that can occur without intervention of an experiment or an artificially contrived treatment (Creswell, 2010).

### **Sampling**

The aim of sampling in social research is to produce representative selections of population elements (Mouton, 2001:132 in Chinyoka and Naidu 2014). Forty traditional and modern African parents were randomly selected from Masvingo and Manicaland Provinces of Zimbabwe. Each subset of the participants had an equal representation of both urban and rural communities. Of the forty participants involved in the study, six participants were interviewed; thirty four (34) participants completed the questionnaires in order to authenticate interview findings. Participants' ages ranged from 25 to 75 years. Older parents were also involved in order to obtain more indigenous forms of knowledge in both traditional African and modern childrearing set-ups. For older and illiterate participants, the questionnaire was translated to vernacular so that participants would feel more comfortable in presenting their ideas.

### **Data Analysis**

The main method that was used to analyse qualitative data from interviews and open ended questionnaires was thematic content analysis. This involved identifying, coding and categorising patterns in data. The researchers applied the thematic content analysis coding method of data analysis to identify themes and categories (Creswell, 2010:155). It is a systemic process of examining, selecting, categorising, comparing, synthesising and interpreting data to address the initial propositions of the study.

### **Validation/ Trustworthiness of Data Collected**

The interviews were audio-taped and the researcher made observations and copious notes during the interviews. This strategy helped to eliminate the problem of inaccuracy or incompleteness of the data which, according to Maxwell (2006:89 in Chinyoka and Naidu, 2014) is the main threat to the valid description of what the researchers saw or heard. Questionnaires were hand administered by the researchers.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The purpose of the study was fully explained to the participants before the data were collected. The study was meant for educational purposes and to enhance indigenous knowledge in as far as parenting is concerned. For the purpose of privacy and personal identity, no names were taken and any if these that may occur in our presentation of findings are mere pseudo names meant for clarity. The participants were informed that their involvement in the study was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw at any stage of the interviews if they were not comfortable. Permission was first obtained from the participants for the interviews to be audio recorded.

## **RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

Participants provided the following as some of the activities that assisted in parental care of an African foetus.

1. It was taboo for an expectant mother to sit at the door step lest she would have difficult labour.
2. Herbs were prescribed by older grandmothers to prepare a neat and easy passage of the new-birth (masuwo).
3. The mother would be denied to eat certain foods such as tripe, fish, citrus fruits and sugarcane. However, any other nourishing foodstuffs were permitted.
4. Sex was prohibited in the eighth and ninth month.
5. Both parents were not to indulge in infidelity lest this would complicate delivery.

In addition to parental care, postnatal activities were also closely monitored. Participants provided some of the following parental activities for discussion.

1. Treatment of 'nhova' at birth was crucial. Herbs were prescribed for use on the head and in the mouth.
2. The mother was given herbs too to treat back-aches whilst the baby was treated on its navel.
3. A special day was set aside for removing the baby's womb hair and burying this together with the baby's umbilical waste (guvhu). The remaining navel part was treated with special mixed herbs to aid healing.
4. No breastfeeding would be done outside the home until after about a month from birth day.
5. A string code and button treatment was tied on the neckline, wrist or waist to drive away evil spirits.
6. Any woman who had had still birth was forbidden from holding the newly born baby.
7. On first visit to a newer place, the baby would be given a pinch of new soil to taste in order to prevent hallucinations.
8. A salty diet was prescribed for the feeding mother for easier milk production for example salted nuts and maize corn (maputi) as snacks.
9. Parents of the newly born baby were to meet sexually after the expiry of three months from the birth of the child. This ensured baby strength, but exposed fathers to infidelity during the period.

### **Prenatal Activities**

This research noted that in rural communities of Zimbabwe, the majority of women, eighty percent (80%), still take seriously the rituals dealing with pregnancy, labour and childcare. Both in Masvingo and in Chipinge, findings of this research reveal that when a first time expectant mother is seven months pregnant, she goes to her parents so that they can administer some herbs, which will make it easy for her when giving birth. In the Shona culture, this is called *kusungira*. A goat brought by the husband's family to their in-laws usually symbolises this. The goat is slaughtered to appease the wife's relatives who will look after the pregnant daughter. An elder said:

*Members of the community witness the procedure. The mother of the pregnant woman, her grandmother, aunties and other relatives are to see to it that the expectant mother gets necessary herbs that will make it easy for her when giving birth.*



Interviews carried by these researchers in both Masvingo and Chipinge, confirmed that the herbs administered while the pregnant woman is staying with the husband are to some extent effective. When the expectant mother is at her parents, she finds time to rest, as she is not under pressure to do work like *muroora* (daughter in law) as she would at her in laws home.

The study established that the Ndau tribe in Manicaland and the Lemba in Tadzembwa, Mapanzure, Masvingo, cover the pregnant woman with a blanket to inhale the smoke from herbs on burning charcoals. The blanket is only removed when the woman is sweating, a sign that the cleansing is finished. This is in line with findings made by Chinyoka (2014). This 'cleansing' is believed to be particularly effective on those women who are likely to have been bewitched or have unfaithful husbands. These conditions were however observed to complicate pregnancy. The modern families on the other hand, also value the prenatal stage though they shunned the use of herbs to aid conception and covering of pregnant women with a blanket to inhale the smoke from the herbs. In an interview, a pregnant woman from one of the urban cities studied, Masvingo, echoed that:

*They visit the doctors and they go to ante-natal clinics where they are given vitamin tablets, iron tablets to help in the growth of the foetus. Most Africans these days also visit the pre-natal clinics and this has reduced the infant mortality rate.*

It was observed in this study that pregnant women were not allowed to eat such foodstuffs like fish, eggs, liver and citrus fruits which these researchers found to be important to the growth of the foetus. The two grandmothers interviewed in Masvingo and the three who were interviewed in Chipinge, concur that strict food taboos were to be observed by pregnant women. However, sixty percent (60%) of the respondents who valued modern Westernised parenting styles encouraged women to eat balanced diet and to have enough time to rest.

### **Post Natal Activities**

These researchers also observed that, after birth, a new mother would spend three months at her parents' home, being taught how to look after the baby and to look after herself. Her mother and grandmother would give her some herbs to make her strong, which are administered through water or food. Besides administering herbs by chewing them and splitting them into the baby's mouth, the mother is supposed to do a ritual, which supposedly controls the sexual appetite of her baby later in life when they are grown up. The mother would express her milk on the private parts of her baby. It is assumed that if one becomes a sex addict later in life, it is blamed on the mother for not having expressed her milk on the private parts of the son/daughter at young age. This was noted to be common even among those African parents that were practising the Westernised parenting styles.

Findings on this study also revealed that in both Masvingo and Chipinge communal areas, an average of forty percent (40%) of the mothers applied charcoal, fine river sand and ground rat droppings on the umbilical cord to hasten the drying and dropping off of the stump though the practices are believed to be unsafe. In contrast, the modern, educated families apply methylated spirit to the moist umbilical cord and these fight bacterial growth and infection and the cord stump drops off within a range of four to fourteen days. The majority of the urban families do not have any belief pertaining to the delay in dropping off the cord stump. The Africans believe that when the cord stump takes long to drop off, the mother has something to confess for example prostitution and/or witchcraft. These findings concur with the research study carried by Papalia, Olds and Fieldman (2004) of the Shona, Baganda, Xhosa and Wanyakysa. The same sentiments were vividly echoed by about four elders interviewed in both Masvingo and Chipinge rural communities.

These researchers also established that from the moment of birth, both Africans and Western infants are well cared for by the mother being the primary care giver. Children from both cultures are breastfed from the onset to gratify their instinctive drives of hunger and thirst (Chinyoka, 2014). This idea is also supported by Sigmund Freud, a proponent of the psychoanalytic theory. The African baby is observed to be fed on demand. Sleeping with the mother at night also permits the baby enough time to be fed on demand. This is done to satisfy the idea which was purported by Sigmund Freud which says that the baby will be operating on the pleasure principle and would always need immediate gratification. Akinware and Ojomo (2003) cited in (Chinyoka 2013) are of the view that breastfeeding bestows immunity and antibodies, contact comfort and cementing the mother-child bond. Through nurturing of the child well, by responding to the feeding and security needs, the child develops trust in the world around and also a bond of attachment with the parent or caregiver as confirmed by Erikson's psychosocial theory. In a way, a child develops mistrust if a caregiver is not responsive to the demands and security needs of the child (Bee, 2007).

In contrast, these researchers also observed that modern and working African mothers schedule their feeding times, that is, these mothers establish a routine with their babies' accustoming them to regular feeding habits. Some modern mothers interviewed purport that they only breast-feed their babies in the morning before they go to work and in the evening after they came from work. This therefore implies that these mothers resort to bottle-feeding in place of breast-feeding during the day. It was established in this research that the baby is left with the caregiver for much of the day, sleeping in its pram or cot bed. The baby is rarely carried about on the mother's back and seldom in arms. This is good for the child since it is training in discipline and independence as advocate by the Western culture.

A study by Mwamwenda, (2010) observed that African infants are precious, that is, they show greatest early acceleration as compared to the Western infants. He argued that the African children's motor development is sustained by frequent handling by family and extended family members and that psychologically provides them with security. An elder in Mapanzure community in Masvingo lamented that, African infants receive a lot of physical and social stimulation, which are enriching for their development unlike the Western infants who spend part of each day alone in a crib or play pen or fenced yard.

This research established that, in the urban areas now, it is very difficult to differentiate between African and Western child rearing styles because most families tend to use both, though to a larger extent the trend is that people are moving from what they call the backward, traditional African style to the modern Western childrearing styles. As a result, some African mothers are also resorting to bottle-feeding as they enter the labour market. Children are also cared for by the maids and may be left at the day care centre. Breast-feeding among Africans is generally for about eighteen months to two years. According to the African culture, the extended family plays a significant role in the rearing of the African child. In contrast, the Western women just stop breast-feeding and continue with bottle-feeding as they wish. The western children are more attached to the maids than to their mothers since they spend most of the day away at work.

Both cultures' primary goals are physical health, intellectual, emotional, moral, social and survival of the children. They both teach cultural values such as morality and prestige. The African child is taught to relate to one another and to those who are senior in age quite early in their lives. According to the African culture, there are traditional games, stories, toys, songs and ways of playing that are passed from older children to the younger children, many of which support children's physical, emotional, social and intellectual development.

According to Vygotsky's social cognitive theory, the siblings scaffold their young brothers and sisters, as they are involved in the traditional games since they are more knowledgeable and skilled. In contrast, the Western children in their early childhood are provided with plenty of toys to play with in accordance to their culture. Many toys have a definite educational value thus even before they go to school, Western children therefore have a knowledge through their toys and picture books of many things they may never have seen.

This research also established that the Shona attach considerable importance to good behaviour and therefore the parents start teaching their children how to behave as soon as they start to talk. They are taught how to greet and behave in an acceptable manner to parents, siblings, relatives and visitors. The African girls are socialised to conduct household chores such as baby-sitting, cooking, sweeping and washing plates while the boys are taught to look after the sheep, goats or cattle. For Western children, both boys and girls help though very little in the home since as from the age of five, they are at school for the whole day.

The way the parents act towards their children and the demands that they set can have a lasting influence on the children. The study has also identified three different parenting styles and these are reflected by the African and Western parents. African parents are authoritarian parents, that is, they exert strict control and expect absolute obedience among their children. Some African parents lack warmth and affection as a result. These researchers established that an African child is expected to obey his parent's instructions unquestionably and is not expected to answer back when he/she is reprimanded. Instructions must be taken as they are and there is no room for excuses, argument and alternative forms of behaviour. These parents value obedience, conformity and cooperation and favour punitive measures, such as corporal punishment when their children attempt to behave contrary to their expectations.

In researches carried out in Masvingo and Chipinge, findings were that in Zimbabwe, they believe that physical punishment is the best and that a person is the product of corporal punishment. It was also noted that children conform to rules in fear of punishment, that is, they start to develop moral reasoning and are in the pre-conventional stage according to Kohlberg's theory of moral development. Children do not have any say in the running of the home and they are never consulted for anything. Bronfenbrenner (2002) as cited in Darling and Steinberg (2004) purports that working class parents are more authoritarian in their childrearing practices than those who spent the whole day at home. The stress placed by the working class parents on the discipline and conformity reflect their own job experience. Hyman (1953) and John (1963) as quoted by Popenoe (2003) assert that, by being authoritarian, the parents will be preparing children for the future work, which require obedience.

There is however a serious paradigm shifts from very traditional ways of parenting to modern ways which enhance the holistic development of children as noted by these researchers. Some parents in Zimbabwe communities have adopted the use of the authoritative (democratic) and the permissive parenting styles. Cole and Cole (2010:436) posit that, "Authoritative parents try to control their children by explaining their rules or decisions and by reasoning with them. They set high standards for their children's behavior" Borich and Tombari (2003) is of the view that, "Authoritative parents try to direct their children's activities by establishing firm rules and standards but willing to discuss behind their regulations". From the two assertions, the common notion is that authoritative parents set rules, standards and these are discussed with their children, and they follow them consistently.

This research established that children raised by authoritative parents were friendly, self-confident and socially responsible. The children were raised to be independent, to think for themselves and sometimes even to question their parents' behaviour. The parents were noted



to be loving, consistent, demanding and respectful of their children's independent decisions, but they are firm in maintaining standards and willing to impose limited punishment. This research found out that the children are adored, watched over ceaselessly, carefully trained, unselfishly brought up to be fully independent, always with their own benefit in mind and never that of their parents. The parents were noted to be friendlier towards their children and try to make them feel happy and as possible free. The parents emphasise the educational aspect of discipline rather than the punitive part of it. Meals are at very definite times, when the whole family eats at one table. A child must come to the table at the proper time; if he refuses to eat he is usually made to wait the next mealtime before being given food.

This study established that bedtimes too are regularly monitored that is the mother or father sees that the children are comfortable in their bedrooms, switches off the light and leaves them to go to sleep and they cannot get out in bed without permission until morning. This sort of thing helps to respect for time, which is perhaps one of the secrets of their progress. As the traditional Africans, any time is teatime. The children may go to bed at any time they feel like and wake up when they feel like, unless there is scheduled activities/work to be done early next morning.

This study established that very few Africans (less than 20%) are permissive parents. They make a few demands on their children, that is, they give their children total freedom with little or no discipline. They give their children a lot of leeway to determine their own schedules and activities and often consult them about family policies. Children do whatever pleases them and make their own decisions without consulting parents. Where there is conflict of choices chaos may reign in such families. The effects of this parenting style on children's education are that the children face conflicts between school and home culture since school demands conformity and discipline, which their homes do not. The children may rebel if discipline is imposed on them. They have difficulties in working in groups. They do not recognize the authority and they tend to be disruptive in the classroom that their behavior may disturb the learning of other children. These children may demand too much attention from the teacher at the expense of other children. This argument researched by (Chinyoka, 2013, Mwamwenda, 2010, Papalia and Odds, 2004 and Brooks, 2008).

## **EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS**

Haralambos and Hearld (2010) acknowledge that as a competent teacher, one needs to adopt one's way of teaching to the characteristics of the children in one's cultural setting. This therefore implies that teachers have to understand a child as he/she in his/her home environment, so that what he/she experiences at home can be linked with what he/she does and studies at school. The teachers should provide emotional security to the children under care that is the teacher has to be the secure base from which the children will be free to explore the environment. Since most children from authoritarian parents conform due to fear of punishment, the teacher should provide a humanized learning environment, which fosters the feeling of basic trust. The classroom environment should be free from threat and should empower the child with confidence, which may generate a desire to effectively explore the world. Siann and Ugwuegbu (1983) in Mwamwenda (2010) posit that teachers should love their pupils in the same way they would expect parents to. In a study carried out by Washburne and Heild (1960) and Rosenshine (1971) as cited in Haralambos and Hearld (2010), teachers who demonstrated warmth in their interactions with pupils tended to be more effective than teachers who did not. Consistency of school values within a particular helps the pupils to know and understand what sort of behavior is expected of them. This therefore, indicates that, a welcoming school environment, which is accommodating, may make up for what has been lacking at home.

Based on child practices, a teacher would be able to select positive aspects to be emphasized and negative aspects to be de-emphasized. This could be affected through interactions between the teacher and the child's parents. Since most African cultures emphasized the importance of personal integrity and industry, teachers must assign their various tasks and emphasizing that they must do their best and always be honest. Findings from this research posit that most Africans tend to be shy, withdrawn, and tense when called upon to participate in class discussions. Teachers therefore need to respect these characteristics of the students while they figure out how to introduce the elements of freedom and positive participation in the school.

Knowledge of African child rearing practices makes teachers of African children sensitive and aware of some values that have shaped them and there is need for the teacher to interact with the pupils. While teachers may not agree with all practices, they should treat them with respect and understanding so as to accommodate all pupils. Group tasks should be provided to promote cooperation which is virtual in providing a person with a sense of security should a need for others' help arise.

## **CONCLUSION**

Last but not least, this paper examines traditional African childrearing styles and parenting styles, focusing on the impact this has on the psychosocial development of a child. Most families in Zimbabwe now find themselves somewhere along the continuum between the African and Western childrearing styles. As a result, there is a paradigm shift from a strictly traditional to a diluted Western oriented way of parenting. Knowledge of African childrearing practices is therefore important since it enables teachers to be sensitive and accommodative to all pupils thus avoiding making them feel inferior, marginalised or ashamed of their identity. From the study, it was noted that there are positive aspects on childrearing practices from both traditional African and modern cultures. There is need for parents to marry all childrearing styles focusing on the positive aspects of each to develop a psychologically stable child. All parents, be they Africans or Europeans, should be more democratic in their parenting styles so as to come up with independent children who are free to ask and explore the environment for effective learning to take place. Teachers need to provide an appropriate environment and use their professional skills and knowledge for the effective learning of an African child.

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