

An Investigation of the Nature and fulfilment of Psychosocial well-being of Adolescent children from single-parent homes

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ABSTRACT

It has been a historical norm in African societies for children to live in the homes of caregivers. Among these caregivers are the grandparents, who are from time immemorial, being a pillar of support to their children in caring for their grandchildren. Against this background, the paper examined the nature and fulfilment of adolescent children's psychosocial well-being from single-parent homes under the custody of custodial grandparents. The study utilized a quantitative research approach to administer 150 questionnaires to adolescent children from Buffalo City Metropolitan, South Africa, through a multi-stage sampling technique to select respondents. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics. The findings identified adolescent children's psychosocial well-being needs: as well the psychological, spiritual, emotional, and social and physical needs. The study also found out that custodial grandparents appreciably met the psychosocial needs of the adolescent children. Other findings revealed that the adolescent children in the municipality considered their spiritual lives less important. The study concluded that custodial grandparents should ensure they teach and promote activities/values that enhance their grandchildren's spiritual lives.

Keyword: Grand-parenting, Custodial grandparents, Adolescent children, psychosocial, well-being

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Introduction

There has been a persistent rise in the number of children raised in the homes headed by grandparents in recent decades (Leinaweaver, 2014; Pearce, Abbas, Ferguson, Graham and Law, 2010; Uhlenberg and Cleuk, 2010). The prevalence is due to a child's absent parent or no longer able to be a parent for several reasons such as death, divorce, drug and alcohol abuse, AIDS, economic factors, domestic violence, mental health and chronic illness and, teenage or unwanted pregnancy, thereby prompting their parents' intervention in parenting (Betancourt, Fawzi, Bruderlein, Desmond and Kim, 2010; Folorunsho and Tanga, 2021; Ungar, Ghazinour and Richter, 2013).

Grand-parenting has been prevalent across every nation and has continued to rise from time to time (Chen and Liu, 2012; Silverstein, and Giarrusso, 2010). The available statistical record across all the provinces of South Africa (2015) showed that with 18.6 million children under the age of 18, 41.6% (7.7 million) of them lived in the family headed by grandparents. Eastern Cape Province has the highest number of children living raising and raise by grandparents in South Africa. The majority of the children residing with their grandparents were from the age of nine years and above (Hall and Sambu, 2018). The number of grandparents who are usually grandmothers are predominantly more than that of the grandfathers, thus, causing the caring for grandchildren to be left primarily in the custody of grandmothers (Kiralý, James and Humphreys, 2015; Viguer, Meléndez, Valencia, Cantero and Navarro, 2010).

Custodial grandparents are gradually increasing and have been an essential source of support to families, by providing care to the younger generation because live span has continued to increase, and there is a continuous decrease in fertility (Attar-Schwartz, Tan and Buchanan, 2009; Dolbin-MacNab and Hayslip, 2014; Gasa, 2012; Li, Lam and Chan, 2017). The extended live span has led to an increase in the population of 60 years and above (Statistics

South Africa, 2017). There is a high tendency for the children nowadays to be parented by the grandparents than children born from past decades years (Uhlenberg and Cheuk, 2010).

Many pieces of evidence from the literature emphasized the implication contained on the grandchildren's psychosocial well-being as they are being cared for by their grandparents and the effect they also have on grandparents (Triadó, Villar, Celdrán and Solé, 2014). However, there was a dearth of research focusing on the nature and needs of the grandchildren. The relationships between grandchildren and grandparents generate a positive influence on children's well-being (Tan, Buchanan, Flouri, Attar-Schwartz, and Griggs, 2010). Grandchildren that have a stronger bond with their grandparents tend to show lesser symptoms of depression (Baker and Silverstein, 2008). Grandchildren from the home of single parents showed most signs of depression if the interaction grandparents have were weak and showed lesser symptoms when the bond became stronger (Ruiz and Silverstein 2007). According to Griggs, Tan, Buchanan, Attar-Schwartz and Flouri (2010), there exists a stronger interaction between adolescent children and their mothers' grandmothers in particular. They also proved that the more the closeness between the adolescent children and their grandparents, the more the grandparental involvement in the school's assignments.

The close relationship between the grandchildren and grandparents often develops into the spiritual growth of the children. Children generally emulate the elderly ones, and they tend to follow them in whatever they do. Grandparents who are religiously upright may positively impact on their children's spiritual lives (Dunifon, 2013; Weston and Moloney 2014). They serve as the source of spiritual guidance to their grandchildren by teaching them how to live in love, compassion, peace, joy, resilience, gentleness, and merciful (Mansson, 2016). The custodial grandparents have to ensure the attainment of the social life of their adolescent children. The relationships between

grandchildren and grandparents generally generate a positive influence on children's well-being (Weston and Moloney, 2014; Zeng and Xie, 2014). They achieve the social well-being in grandchildren's lives through the active role played, such as showing love, affection, and close relationship with the grandchildren (Downie, Hay, Horner, Wichmann and Hislop, 2010). However, out-dated ideas on child development may impede the fulfilment of social well-being (Campbell and Miles, 2008; Kuo and Operario 2011).

Theoretical Framework

This study is based on role theory. Role theory is a viewpoint in psychology and sociology that considers the majority of the everyday activities to be carrying on the socially-characterized classes (e.g., director, instructor and mother) (Thiele and Whelan, 2008). Every role is a plan of rights, commitments, wants, practices and standards needed to be confronted with and satisfied by man. By increasing the value of a specific role, individual channel owns inclinations and needs toward it (Grace, 2012).

The theory investigates the impacts of grandparents' role on the attainment of their grandchildren's psychosocial well-being. The theory clarifies how an individual expects to perform his duties in society; thus, helping to investigate how grandparents' caregiving roles will affect their grandchildren's psychosocial development. In the African setting, it is a social desire that grandparents positively impact on their grandchildren's lives by ensuring that they are well-socialized and cultured (Bordone & Arpino, 2016; Hank and Buber, 2009). The roles played by the grandparents have a direct link to the psychosocial well-being of their grandchildren. Therefore, it provides an understanding of how custodial grandparents perform their tasks in ensuring the attainment of their grandchildren's overall well-being.

Material and methods

The study adopted a quantitative research design and collected data from 150 questionnaires administered to adolescent children drawn from East London, King William's Town, and Mdantsane in Buffalo City Municipality, Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. A multi-stage sampling procedure was used to select three towns randomly out of the five major towns in the municipality. The second stage of the sampling procedure entailed randomly selecting five high schools from each of the three selected towns. Fifteen high schools were selected in the second stage. Stage three comprised of randomly selecting ten adolescent students from the five selected high schools. The respondents comprised of both male and female adolescents between the ages of 10 and 17 years.

The questionnaire used in this study was derived after a comprehensive review of grand-parenting. Each questionnaire was attached with a covering letter to give the objectives of the research, for each voluntary respondent to answer the entire question asked candidly, and assure that their information provided will be confidentiality treated. The instructions on how the questionnaire would be filled and returned were provided alongside with the questionnaires. The cleared instructions provided to the respondents ensured them of the confidentiality of the information they provided and reduced the tendency of obtaining biased responses (Baker, 2007). The Chronbach alpha also used to measure the coefficient of reliability of the data gathered. The scale ranged between 0.7 and 0.95 for all the procedures measured.

The quantitative data collected were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS version 22). The data analysis followed a multi-faced approach. Information collected from each of the questionnaires was coded and entered into the computer. The data was analysed and interpreted using descriptive statistics from the SPSS software explaining the trends and levels through frequencies and percentages. Further illustrations of the analysis were made using tables and figures.

Results

Analysis of the demographical characteristics of the respondents

Table 1 presents the findings of the descriptive analyses of the demographical characteristics of the respondents for the study sample. The majority of the respondents (61.3%) were females, while a minority (38.7%) were males. The majority (97.3%) that took part in the study were of Black African descendants, a smaller proportion (2.0%) were from Coloured descendants, while Indian/Asian represented the least (0.7%) interviewed. Findings revealed that most significant proportions of the respondents (27.3%) were of the age group of 14 years; this was followed by those of age 15 (19.3%), respondents of ages of 16 and 17 were of equal proportion and they accounted for 18.7%, while the least of the respondent (2.0%) were of age 12.

Table 1: Demographical characteristic of the adolescent grandchildren (n=150)

Characteristics	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Female	92	61.3
Male	58	38.7
Ethnicity		
Black African	146	97.3
Coloured	3	2.0
Indian/Asian	1	0.7
Age		
12	3	2.0
13	21	14.0
14	41	27.3
15	29	19.3
16	28	18.7
17	28	18.7
Care duration (year)		
1 – 4	34	22.7
5 – 8	23	15.3
9 – 12	24	16.0
13 – 16	44	29.3
Above 16	25	16.7

Discussion

This study provides a much-needed understanding of the nature and fulfilment of psychosocial well-being of adolescent children from single parents in Buffalo City Metropolitan of South Africa. With the aid of the quantitative method, the study's findings revealed that the nature and types of psychosocial needs of adolescent children were psychological well-being, the spiritual well-being, the emotional well-being, and the social and physical well-being.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of the psychological well-being

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Disagree	1	.7	.7	.7
Neutral	6	4.0	4.0	4.7
Valid Agree	77	51.3	51.3	56.0
Strongly agree	66	44.0	44.0	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 reveals the descriptive statistics of the transformed aspects of the psychological well-being. From the respondents' aggregate response on their psychological well-being, 0.7% of the respondents disagreed, 4.0% were neutral, while 95.3% agreed on their psychological well-being as paramount. The descriptive statistics of the spiritual well-being needs of the adolescent children is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of the spiritual well-being

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Less important	92	61.3	61.3	61.3
Valid More important	33	22.0	22.0	83.3
Most important	25	16.7	16.7	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

From Table 3, it was revealed that 61.3% of the children regarded their spiritual well-being as less important, while 38.7% regard their spiritual well-being as very important. It is an indication that the spiritual well-being of the adolescent children in the Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality is not a matter of importance. The descriptive statistics of the emotional well-being needs of adolescent children given in Table 4.

Table 4: Descriptive statistics of the emotional well-being

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	A little	1	.7	.7
	Some	8	5.3	6.0
	A lot	141	94.0	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0

Table 4 gives the rate of the emotional well-being of respondents received from their grandparents. 0.7% of the respondents received a little attention, 5.3% received some attention, while a more significant percentage of the respondents, (94%) received much emotional attention from their grandparents.

Table 5: Descriptive statistics of the social and physical well-being

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	5	3.3	3.3
	Disagree	2	1.3	4.6
	Neutral	3	2.0	6.6
	Agree	58	38.7	43.3
	Strongly agree	82	54.7	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0

Table 5 gives the aggregate response of the respondents on their social and physical well-being. 4.6% of the respondents disagreed on social and physical well-being, 2.0% were neutral and 93.4% agreed with social and physical well-being. From the descriptive analyses of the nature and fulfilment of adolescent children's psychosocial well-being, it can be inferred that psychological well-being is the most expected psychosocial need, followed by emotional need, next to social and physical. The spiritual need is obtained to be least expected by the children concerning the result of the analysis.

Fulfilling the psychosocial well-being of adolescent children

A series of questions were posed to adolescent children to determine how the grandparents are fulfilling their psychosocial needs. The statistics of the respondents' rate on how their grandparent fulfilment is obtained and presented in Table 5

Table 6: The level of fulfilment of the psychosocial well -being of adolescent children

Items	Percentage				
	SD	D	N	A	SA
My grandparents want me to excel academically.	2.7	2.0	7.3	21.3	66.7
My grandparents were seen as my sources of wisdom and mentors.	0.7	3.3	8.7	28.7	58.7
My grandparents served as a source of my spiritual guidance.	-	1.3	4.0	35.3	59.3
My grandparent taught me how to harvest love, compassion, faith, peace and joy in life.	2.7	-	2.0	30.0	65.3
My grandparents trained me in the way of the Lord.	0.7	-	4.0	29.3	66
My grandparents make life meaningful, fun and social to me.	0.7	1.3	3.3	32.7	62.0

Table 6 revealed that the respondents' grandparents fulfil the adolescent grandchildren's psychosocial needs as a higher percentage of the respondents agree to every one of the items. The highest percentage (95.3%) of the respondents agreed that their grandparents taught them how to harvest love, compassion, faith, peace and joy in life. The same percentage of the respondents

The respondents were mostly teenagers aged 13 years and above (98.0%). Not surprisingly, most of the adolescents reported psychosocial well-being as the most psychosocial need of the adolescent children in the municipality. The psychological well-being of the adolescent children has to do with the continuous process of learning, changing and growing. It revealed that psychological well-being is the determination of the cordial relationship that exists between them and their grandparents. The custodial grandparents' role in ensuring that their grandchildren's psychological well-being is achieved and attained in the study area was highly encouraging. The findings supported the findings of Folorunsho and Tanga (2021) carried out to determine the level of grand-parenting South African adolescent children. They revealed that custodial grandparents ensured all efforts were geared towards achieving the psychological well-being of the adolescent grandchildren. Also, the findings agreed with the finding of Xu (2017) carried out on Chinese American adolescent children age younger than 16 years. They studied the factors

associated with the grandparents' roles in determining the well-being of the teenagers. They found out that the grandchildren's psychological well-being could be achieved through intimate relationships between grandchildren and grandparents. The closeness would generally lead to a positive influence on the psychosocial well-being of their grandchildren. The role theory adopted for this study suggested that the custodial grandparent's role is to guarantee that the well-being of the grandchild is attained. Therefore, it is the grandparents' responsibility to ensure that the psychological well-being of adolescent grandchildren is attained.

Next to the psychosocial need of the respondents, the emotional need identified. The adolescent children confirmed that their emotional well-being is determined by the attention given to them, watching and a good upbringing, taught about life, and the extent of love showed to them by the grandparents. When the grandparents played the role of attention and care to their grandchildren, the overall emotional well-being is attained. The findings on the emotional need as one of the needs of the adolescent children from single parents is corroborated by the findings of Villar et al. (2012) and Chan et al. (2018) that grandparents play a vital role in the lives of their grandchildren by making sure their emotional need is met. The social and physical well-being is the third least psychosocial need for adolescent children from single-parent homes in the municipality. This factor determines the attitudes and dispositions of grandparents when annoyed by their adolescent grandchildren's negative behaviour. The findings revealed that many of the respondents indicated that love and affection, and the extent of love received from their custodial grandparents enhanced their social and physical well-being. When they have friends to share their concerns with, their social and physical well-being is revived. The adolescent grandchild's social and physical well-being is achieved through their grandparents' active role in making sure that they are socially and physically balanced. This finding agreed with Bordone and Arpino (2016)'s findings that grandparents positively on impact on the lives of their grandchildren by ensuring that they

are well socialized and culturally inclined. However, Kuo and Operario (2011) argued that, at times grandparents do not meet the social needs of children, as they often struggle with their health, financial, physical, social and psychological well-being. The role theory was used to understand the nature and fulfilment of the psychosocial needs of adolescent children. According to the role theory, every role is a plan of rights, commitments, wants, practices and standards needed to be confronted and satisfied by a man. By increasing the value of a specific role, the individual channels own inclinations and needs towards it. The theory suggests that individuals can consolidate the strengths and skills acquired in the past to enable them to meet up with their current responsibilities. The custodial grandparents in the municipality were making practical efforts to meeting the needs of the adolescent children. Therefore, the theory supports the findings that the grandparents need to renew their parenting skills and capacities to attain and enhance their grandchildren's psychosocial needs.

The adolescent children in the municipality indicated that their spiritual well-being as the least psychosocial well-being provided by their grandparents. The spiritual need is determined by the help of God who watches over them, their religious beliefs, and prayer and fasting to God when challenges of life arose through the guardian of their spiritual mentors (grandparents). This result was in agreement with the findings of Weston and Moloney (2014) that grandparents often served as spiritual guidance to their grandchildren, teaching them to live in love, compassion, peace, joy, resilience, gentleness, and mercifulness. Mansson (2016) agreed that the close relationships between them and their grandchildren often lead to an increase in the sense of spiritual well-being.

Finally, further investigation to determine the level of fulfilment of the adolescent children's psychosocial well-being revealed a level of significant commitment by the custodial grandparents to their parental responsibilities. The ways grandparents fulfil the needs of

the adolescent children are directly dependent on their grandparents' attitudes and perceptions. The grandparents want them to excel academically, improve their knowledge and wisdom, fear, and obey the Lord. According to Griggs et al. (2010), grandparents fulfilled the role of educator and teacher to their grandchildren, and they usually placed positive pressure on them by making sure they excel academically. They achieved these by always relating to adolescent children through their wealth of experiences. Finding is supported by the findings of Zeng and Xie (2014) that the excellent relationships that exist between grandchildren and grandparents generate a positive influence on the well-being of the grandchildren. They served as the source of spiritual guidance to their grandchildren, including teaching them how to live in love, compassion, peace, joy, resilience, gentleness, and merciful.

Conclusions

Many custodial grandparents in Eastern Cape Province of South Africa were fulfilling the needs of the adolescent children as expected because grand-parenting is not a new practice in South Africa. The results obtained from this study demonstrated the significant positive relationship between grandparents' role and the extent of fulfilling the psychosocial well-being of adolescent children. Despite the custodial grandparents fulfilling the spiritual well-being of their adolescent grandchildren, the majority (61.3%) of the respondents revealed that their spiritual lives were unimportant. It could probably be associated with them being teenagers and could be negatively influenced by their peers to engage in social vices. In light of the low spiritual lifestyles of the adolescent children, it is recommended that custodial grandparents make it a matter of necessity to encourage, teach, and develop their spiritual life.

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