



**Child-mother interaction and child secure- base  
behaviour in Zambia.**

By  
HAATEMBO MOOYA

A Thesis submitted to the University of Zambia in fulfillment of the  
requirements for the Master of Arts degree in Child and Adolescent  
Psychology

THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA,  
LUSAKA

2009

## ABSTRACT

Twenty families from three medium density areas in Lusaka participated in this study to investigate patterns of child-mother interaction and attachment; and the secure-base phenomenon in Lusaka, Zambia. The children were aged between 2 and 5 years (Mean age – 3 years). Data were collected in 3 stages; 2 home visits and 1 visit to the University. On the first and second visits to the home, the researcher and his assistant administered the Physical Punishment Questionnaire; did a video recording while the mother fed the child; and explained the Attachment Q-Sort to the father. The third visit involved the family coming to the University laboratory for the Strange Situation Procedure and another video recording of a laboratory interaction between the mother and the child. Descriptive statistics using, SPSS 14.0 for Windows, were computed to describe and sum the findings on attachment; parental sensitivity; secure-base behaviour; and physical discipline. Correlation coefficients were also computed to test for any relationships between attachment and parental sensitivity; secure-base behaviour and physical discipline; and parental sensitivity and secure-base behaviour. Results revealed the existence of attachment behaviours among the sample and the majority of the sample was securely attached to their mothers, supporting the existence of the universality and normativity hypotheses of attachment theory. Results also showed the existence of the secure-base phenomenon among the Zambian children. Correlations revealed a positive association between parental sensitivity and attachment security, confirming the sensitivity-security hypothesis of attachment theory, as hypothesized. Further it was found that Zambian parents use physical discipline and the most frequently used was spanking, slapping or hitting. The least used disciplinary strategy was beating. There was no association between parents' use of physical discipline and child-secure base behaviour whilst a strong association was found between parental sensitivity and secure-base behaviour.

Copyright © 2009-Haatembo Mooya

All rights reserved.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My deeply heart-felt gratitude first and foremost goes to my Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, for the gift of life and in a special way for the gift of health, enabling me to complete my work without falling ill and becoming incapacitated.

My sincere and heartfelt thanks go to my principal supervisor, Dr. S.O.C Mwaba, for his 'more than supervisory support' and for providing me with 'priceless' guidance during the course of my studies. My thanks also go Professor Marinus H. van IJzendoorn, my external supervisor for his valuable inspiration and input without which this study would not have been possible.

Special thanks go to my fellow colleagues Given and Tamara whose help and support made surmountable the challenges I faced during the period of my studies at Leiden University, Netherlands, and Staff Development Fellowship at the University of Zambia. Without their support and 'shrewd planning' the challenges I faced would have become unbearable and perhaps I would not have completed my studies.

I am greatly thankful to the Psychology department, University of Zambia, for providing me with the opportunity to undertake my studies. My special thanks also go to the Lolle Nauta Foundation, Netherlands, for facilitating the visit to Leiden University and funding the research for this study.

This study would not have been possible without the cooperation of the families that participated in this study and I am greatly thankful to them. I want to thank Happy

Zulu, my research assistant, for his relieving help during data collection. My thanks also go to Gabriel Walubita for his assistance during recruitment of the sample.

My sincere gratitude goes to my family. Special thanks go to my dear wife, Luse, for her rejuvenating support, especially during the write-up phase of this work and for making me believe that all would be well even when I felt unmotivated. My thanks also go to my brother Kaela for his supportive presence during the whole course of my studies and my entire family for their moral and material support towards this study. Finally, I lovingly dedicate this work to mom and dad, for making me the man I am today.