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

By

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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.

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