

**TITLE: TRANSITIONAL OBJECT ATTACHMENT AMONG
YOUNG CHILDREN AT GA-RAMOKGOPA, SOUTH AFRICA.**

By

Ramothwala Phoebe Makgomo

**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree**

Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology

In

The School of Social Sciences

In

The Faculty of Humanities

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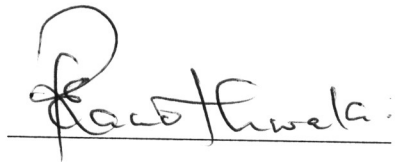
University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus)

Supervisor : Dr. S. Moripe

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Declaration

I declare that the dissertation hereby submitted to the University of Limpopo (Turffloop Campus) for the degree Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other University, that is my own work in design and in execution, and that all material contained therein has been duly acknowledged.



Phoebe Makgomo Ramothwala

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18.05.2007

Submitted

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Abstract

The study explored transitional object attachment at Eisleben Village, Limpopo-South Africa. The participants of the study were mothers of children who were between six months and two years of age. The instrument used to explore transitional object attachment was obtained from a related study, while the instruments used to study the participants' personality style were the Adult Attachment Questionnaire and the Relationship Questionnaire.

There was low prevalence of transitional object attachment at Eisleben Village. Several factors had an impact on whether or not the child becomes attached to an object, i.e. the socio-economic status of the participants as well as the child rearing practices.

Contents

Declaration	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Abstract	iii
Table of contents	iv
List of tables	vii
List of appendices	viii

Chapter 1: Introduction

1. Introduction	1
1.1 Statement of the problem	3
1.2. Aim	4
1.3. Objectives	4
1.4 Scope of the study	5
1.5 Significance of the study	5

Chapter 2: Theoretical Concepts

2. Introduction	6
2.1. Operational definitions	6
2.1.1. Transitional Object	6

2.1.2	Transitional Phenomena	6
2.1.3.	Attachment	7
2.2.	Theoretical overview	7
2.2.1	Winnicott's theory	7
2.2.2	Other theories on transitional objects	9

Chaper 3: Literature Review

3.1.	Description of transitional object	13
3.2.	Importance of a transitional object	15
3.3.	Onset of the development of a transitional object	17
3.4.	Prevalence of transitional object among different cultures	18
3.5.	Socio-economic status	19
3.6.	Cultural child rearing practices	20
3.7.	Method of feeding	25
3.8.	Developmental trends	26
3.9.	Maternal attitudes	27
3.10.	Psychological sequelae of a transitional object	28
3.11.	Attachment theory	30
3.12.	Mothers attachment style	34
3.13.	Hypothesis	35

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1. Introduction	36
4.2. Research design	36
4.3. Participants and Sampling method	36
4.4. Data collection	37
4.5. Data collection instruments	37
4.5.1. Prevalence of transitional object	37
4.5.2. Mothers attachment style	38
i. The Relationship Questionnaire	39
ii. The Adult Attachment Scale	39
4.6. Procedure	40
4.7. Data analysis	40

Chapter 5: Results

5.1. Participant's characteristics	42
5.2. Variables of the study	43
5.3. Mothers comment on transitional objects	44

Chapter 6: Discussion

6.1.	Introduction	47
6.2.	Prevalence of transitional object attachment	47
6.3.	Socio-economic status	48
6.4.	Child rearing practices	49
6.5.	Transitional object attachment	53
6.6.	Mothers feeling and attitude towards transitional object	55
6.7.	Mother's additional comments.	55
6.8.	Mother's Personality style	56
6.9.	Conclusion	58
6.10.	Limitations of the study	59
6.11.	Recommendations	60
7.	References	62

List of tables

Table 1	Incidence of Transitional Object attachment	43
Table 2	The mothers' child-rearing and related practices	44

List of Appendices

Appendix A	Transitional Object Attachment Questionnaire	69
Appendix B	Relationship Questionnaire (RQ)	76
Appendix C	Adult attachment Questionnaire	78

Chapter 1

Introduction

1. Introduction

In the recent years, there has been a renewed interest in studying the phenomenon that Winnicott (1953) first described as a transitional object or the “first not me possession”. Broadly defined, transitional object is that object (soft toy, blanket, diaper etc.) to which an infant becomes attached, sometime during the first two years of life. It serves a unique function as a soother in the face of stress. Often, such objects seem more important to the anxious child than the presence of the mother herself. Such treasured possessions have popularly been labelled security objects (Winnicott, 1953).

Much has been made of the psychological and developmental importance of these possessions in the psychoanalytic literature, but little is actually known about the prevalence of such phenomena or the variables that govern their development. Winnicott (1953) assumed this special attachment to an inanimate object to be universal in healthy children. He further implied that the transitional experience represented by the attachment to a treasured possession could not develop unless the child had experienced the care of a good enough mother. Thus, despite the opinion of a few writers (Dicks, 1963; & Sperling, 1963) who view the transitional object as a pathological fetish, the main body of

psychoanalytic thought has constructed the presence of a transitional object as a sign of healthy mother-child attachment.

The phenomenon of transitional objects is mostly common in Western societies. Many children in those societies become emotionally attached to a special soft toy, blanket, or similar object (Gilligan, 1994; Litt, 1986; & Mahalski, 1983). Alternatively, these children become engaged in some particular behaviours or mannerisms (Mahalski, 1983; & Stern, 1985). Winnicott (1953) calls these phenomena transitional object and transitional phenomena, respectively. The general importance of transitional phenomena and transitional object is that of developing a sense of separateness, a cohesive self that differentiates the individual infant (Winnicott, 1971).

The object and behaviours are usually observed when a child is preparing to sleep, separating from the primary caregiver, or experiencing feelings of psychological distress. Transitional phenomena refer to often unnoticed or unobservable repetitious behaviours, mannerisms, sounds, fantasies, and thoughts that also serve soothing and psychologically supportive functions for young children (e.g., Hong & Townes, 1976). The term transitional object, which is the exclusive focus of the present study, refers to a special object, commonly a soft teddy bear, string, wool, blanket, or diaper, which often provides comfort during the early months and years of life.

In spite of a long history of theorizing, especially within the developmental Psychoanalytic perspective, there is still some disagreement about the incidence of transitional object attachment and transitional phenomena within given communities. In addition, the universal nature of the phenomenon, initially alleged by Winnicott (1953), is put to doubt by cross-cultural findings (e.g., Hobara, 2003). It is in the light of the lack of generalizable descriptions and the doubtful universality of the phenomenon that a study such as the present one becomes necessary.

1.1. Statement of the problem

Studies of the nature and incidence of transitional object point to lack of clarity and universality. Although transitional objects were initially thought to occur in all cultures and societies, subsequent research has cast doubt on this claim. It is not clear from the available literature exactly which aspects of parenting tend to promote the development of a transitional object.

The main problem in the present study is the lack of research on transitional object attachment in South Africa. The present study attempts to determine if the existence of a transitional object is widespread in an African sample drawn from a rural village. There is also a need to isolate

those parenting practices and family circumstances that are associated with the development of a transitional object. The mother's role is also added. Not many studies focus on the characteristics of the mother. In this study, the attachment style of a mother is explored (e.g., secure, anxious, ambivalent attachments) as a possible factor contributing to the development of a transitional object.

1.2. Aim

The aim of this study is to research the prevalence of transitional object attachment in young children at Eisleben Village – Limpopo Province, South Africa. The present study also investigates the role that the attachment style of a mother, and her particular child rearing practices, play on the development and attachment to a transitional object(s).

1.3. Objectives

- To investigate the incidence of transitional object attachment in a rural black community
- To investigate child rearing practices and how they affect development and attachment to a transitional object.
- To investigate the attachment style of the mother, and how it affects attachment to a transitional object.

1.4. Scope of the study

A good research setting is one in which a researcher obtains easy access to informants, establishes rapport and gathers data directly related to the research in question. Among other factors, it was against this backdrop that the present researcher chose to conduct the research at Eisleben Village, Limpopo Province.

1.5. Significance of the results

Given that the use of a transitional object is associated with mental health, the prevalence of this phenomenon among African children will help in the planning of interventions. Alternatively, lack of transitional object use is essential in understanding developmental dynamics among children.

Chapter 2

Theoretical concepts

2. Introduction

Definition of concepts opens this chapter, followed by related theories on transitional object attachment.

2.1. Operational definitions

2.1.1. Transitional object

Transitional object is described by Winnicott (1953) as a pacifier, blanket or teddy bear. This object serves as a substitute for the mother during an infant's effort to separate and become independent. It provides a soothing sense of security in the absence of a mother.

2.1.2 Transitional phenomena

Transitional phenomena refer to often unnoticed or unobservable repetitious behaviours, mannerisms, sounds, fantasies, and thoughts that also serve soothing and psychologically supportive functions for young children (Hong & Townes, 1976).

2.1.3. Attachment

Bowlby (1988) defines attachment as an enduring emotional bond, characterised by a tendency to seek and maintain closeness to a specific figure, particularly during stressful situations.

2.2. Theoretical overview

The theory of transitional object attachment consists primarily of Winnicott's (1953) theory.

2.2.1. Winnicott's theory

A psychoanalyst by the name of Winnicott (1953) has been influential in developing a theory about objects, which he called "transitional objects". He holds that an object is thought of as transitional because it becomes used in mental operations and yet has been, now or in the past, a non-mental, material existence. Winnicott's (1953) meaning of a transitional object goes further to postulate that, in an infant's perception, the transitional object is seen as belonging to both the mother (where the child belonged) and also to the world (where the child is going to).

Using a psychoanalytic frame of reference, Winnicott (1953) discussed the theoretical significance of a child's attachment to inanimate objects. He recognised that an infant's attachment to an inanimate object serves no

vital function, but only facilitates a phase of emotional growth. He states that these objects are held to occupy a special place in the development of object relations. He believes that it belonged to a phase where an infant, whilst barely capable of the use of symbolism, is nevertheless progressing towards it, hence “the use of the term transitional”.

Winnicott (1953) says, “the piece of blanket” (or whatever it is) is symbolical of some part, such as the breast. Nevertheless, the point of it is not its symbolic value, so much as its actuality. It is not being the breast (or mother) that is as important as the fact that it stands for the breast (or mother), the writer thinks that there is a use of the term for the root of symbolism in time (Winnicott, 1953). The term describes the infant’s journey from being purely subjective to objectivity, and it seems to him that the transitional object (piece of blanket, etc) is what we see of this journey of progress towards experiencing.

Although Winnicott’s (1953) terminology is now widely adopted, the theory on which it is based is open to question (Bowlby, 1958). Winnicott offered the proposition that attachment to a transitional object is normal and universal, and that transitional phenomena is closely related in origin.

Bowlby (1958) adopts a more parsimonious way of looking at the role of inanimate objects. He regards them simply as objects towards which certain components of attachment behaviour come to be directed, because

the natural object (breast or mother) is unavailable. Bowlby refers to such objects as “substitute objects”. Boniface and Graham (1979) support Bowlby’s theory.

Winnicott (1953) clearly indicates that any object, thought or concept can become a transitional object. It need only be experienced in the intermediate area. He emphasises that a transitional object serves as a bridge between the familiar and the disturbingly unfamiliar, thus facilitating the acceptance of the new. He sees it as a temporary creation to aid an infant in the early stages of development of the sense of reality and identity, and in separation from the mother.

2.2.2. Other theories on transitional object

- a. Passman and Halonen (1979) argue that according to ethological theory, the comfort object substitutes for the mother, and should form only if attachment to the mother is secure. Furthermore, if a mother's nurturing and distress-reducing presence is associated with an inanimate object, attachment behaviours toward the object may ensue. Because the child is able to control a security object more readily than the mother, attachment to it should begin to develop relatively independently of the mother (Passman & Halonen, 1979).

It is not, however, clear from any of the theories why some children engage in comfort habits while others do not (Passman & Halonen, 1979). Child-rearing practices are often cited as contributing factors, especially children's sleeping arrangements and parental behaviour at bedtime, but evidence has largely been inconclusive. Cultural and socioeconomic factors have received stronger support, although, the exact mechanisms underlying the differential acquisition of non-social attachments remain unclear (Passman & Halonen, 1979). A mother's sensitivity to her children's security needs may be relevant, but the quality of the mother-child relationship seems not to be. However, preliminary evidence suggests that the security of a child's attachment to the mother predicts how the security object is used in novel situations (Passman & Halonen, 1979).

- b. Coppolillo (1967) states that the transitional object and the transitional mode of experience are necessary elements in mediating the formation of ego structures, and ensuring the ego's optimal autonomy from the id and the environment.
- c. Greenacre (1969) postulates that a transitional object is a temporary construction to aid an infant in the development of a sense of reality and individual identity.

- d. Busch (1974) views a transitional object as a mediating assistant, which leads to the development of the psychic structure and self-soothing mechanisms.

- e. Tolpin (in Busch, 1974) describes an infant's perception of the mother as the main figure of her sense of well being and relief from distress during the symbiotic state. By using a transitional object during this stage, the infant has imbued her blanket with the mother's soothing and tension reducing functions. In contrast to Winnicott's (1958) statement that when the child develops other interests, the transitional object simply loses meaning, Tolpin states that the infant uses that to become part of the matrix of the ego. She further proposes that the transitional object becomes an auxiliary soother by means of countless minute internalization and, as a result, it evolves into a soothing psychic structure. This process aids the infant to establish a cohesive self when facing the separation-individuation task.

- f. Bowlby (1969) states that attachment behaviour is a biological and evolutionally based behaviour system, and defines it as proximity-seeking and contact maintaining behaviour directed towards the mother or her substitute. He describes five main components of attachment behaviour namely, clinging, sucking, crying, smiling, and following. Since these behaviours are biologically based, they are instinctively directed towards a substitute if the natural object is unavailable.

As can be seen from the above-mentioned theorists, each theorist sees transitional object attachment from a different perspective. Further, it is interesting to note that all of them view transitional object attachment in a positive light. These views are relevant to the present research in that, transitional object attachment can now be put into perspective with specific reference to child development.

Chapter 3

Literature review

3.1. Description of a transitional object

Winnicott (1953) was among the first psychoanalysts to observe in clinical settings, and describe the importance of special objects in the lives of small children. He introduced the term transitional object to designate and describe his observations. The term transitional object refers to a special object, often used to provide comfort during the early months and years of life.

In Winnicott's (1953) view, transitional object attachment begins to show anytime between four and twelve months. The child selects the transitional object within the first five years of life. It is used for at least one year or more. The transitional object does not form part of a child's body and would not have been part of the child's life since birth. Characteristically, it is often part of the crib or items used in a child's care. In Winnicott's (1953, 1971) view, it must survive potentially destructive behaviours and affects such as instinctual loving and hating, and pure aggression. It must sooth and serve as a source of comfort to a child in times of stress. The object must remain the same, unless the child himself changes it.

Busch (1974) proposes a more or less similar definition of a transitional object that comprises of six necessary and sufficient criteria. Transitional object attachment must manifest within the first year of life, and must be of a lasting duration (e.g., one year or longer). The object must possess the capacity to help a child manage stressful experiences and anxieties. The object, in Busch's view, must not meet a direct oral or libidinal need (e.g., breast or bottle). It must be chosen by the infant, and not be provided by the parent. Finally, the object that the child chooses should not be part of the infant's body (e.g., thumb or finger) (Busch, 1974).

Busch (1974) also draws the distinction between two types of transitional objects. He points out that attachment to blankets and diapers typically appears before 12 months of age, while attachments to soft toys or stuffed animals appear around 18 months or later. He also argues that there must be a qualitative difference between these two groups because of vast cognitive and developmental differences in children at these two age periods. Thus, he designates the attachment formed to a blanket before 12 months as the primary or first transitional object, and labelled the attachment formed to a soft toy during the second year the secondary or second transitional object.

As a child grows, the transitional object fades away. Litt (1981) summarized available research data and concluded that the average age to relinquish the transitional object is around seven years.

Similarly, Busch (1974) found through clinical observations that the average age of giving up a transitional object is between five and seven years. Winnicott (1953) argue that, as a child develops, the transitional object loses its traditional value, and this is transferred to abstract phenomena such as religion, play, art, and scientific creativity. However, during early childhood, the transitional object remains important. The importance of a transitional object together with the context of its occurrence is discussed hereafter.

3.2. The importance of a transitional object

One way of assessing the importance of a transitional object is to determine how frequently a child resorts to it, and what implications this practice has for mental health. Several studies have shown how children use a transitional object for transitional purposes. Passman (1987) and Jalongo (1987) showed that the use of a transitional object by children of nursery age is not pathological, either in terms of the proportion of children using it or in terms of the characteristic diagnosable behaviours in these children (Boniface & Graham, 1979). Newson and Newson (1968) and Mahalski (1983) found positive associations between the use of a transitional object and various ego strengths.

Sherman, Herzig, Austrian and Shapiro (1981) found no differences between users and non-users. Several other studies have also shown that the use of a transitional object contributes to mental health (Boniface & Graham, 1979; Mahalski, 1983; Provence & Ritvo, 1961).

Observations of transitional phenomena, rather than a transitional object, have demonstrated that transitional behaviour is almost universal. Special speech patterns in particular, have demonstrated that transitional behaviour is almost universal. Special speech patterns (Stern, 1985) and expressive productions such as drawings (Winnicott, 1953) are related to a wide range of mechanisms that a child may use to deal with transitions. Children must deal with transitions that require internal changes to accompany the process of development or changes imposed by the external world. Winnicott (1953) focus particularly on the transitions in a developing child's inner perceptions and experiences. However, coping with internal transitions in response to changes in the external world is one of the most frequent challenges of early childhood.

According to Tabin (1992), the degree of relief that a transitional object can give is clear in the painful reaction of tiny children who cannot have their chosen transitional object when they require it. She also adds that the significant alleviation of anxiety can derive from using a transitional object in a self-objectifying way because children can cope with two

important variables in this manner, namely, personal control and continuity.

3.3. Onset of the development of a transitional object

Little is known concerning the rates at which infants develop attachment behaviour towards a transitional object, and how this behaviour develops. According to Winnicott (1953), Stevenson (1954) and Bowlby (1969), the onset of the development of a transitional object varies greatly between one month and three years of age.

Busch, Humberto, McKnight, Pezzarossi (1973) found in their study that, attachment to a soft object usually occurs between the ages of six to nine months. Hong and Townes (1976) concur with these findings. The process of attachment is more often than not, a silent one. Parents usually become aware of it when the attachment has become so intense, to the extent that temporary misplacement of that object becomes a source of distress to the child (Busch, et. al 1973). Parental attitudes, especially at this stage, are important because their attitude determines whether the first transitional object will develop or not.

Reports by Stevenson (1954) and Busch, et. al (1973) indicate that, there are two clear periods when lasting attachments to inanimate objects occur. The first period being during the first year of childhood, the object is the

first transitional object and the second period in two years of age, is the second transitional object. In addition, it has also been noted that those infants who develop an attachment in the first period, rarely develop a second attachment in the second period.

Busch's (1974) belief is that, it is not useful to refer to attachments to inanimate objects by the child at two different stages of development, simply as transitional objects, because by lumping them together, important developmental issues for each period are obscured, especially in respect of enormous differences in the development of drives, egos and objects relations.

3.4. Prevalence of transitional objects among different cultures

Evidence from several studies makes it clear that transitional object attachment is far from a universal phenomenon and is most prevalent in Western cultures (Litt, 1981). Newson and Newson (1968) conducted the first survey of the incidence of transitional object attachment at bedtime. They found that 31% of a sample of Nottingham four year olds insisted on taking a cuddly toy or blanket to bed. Gaddini and Gaddini (1970) found that the incidence of transitional objects was 4.9% in a sample of 682 rural Italian children, 31.1% in a sample of 450 children living in Rome, and 61.5% among 52 Anglo Saxon children living in Rome.

Hong and Townes (1976) studied the incidence of object attachment in three groups of children, Americans, Koreans in Korea and Koreans living in America. The average age of children in their sample was close to three years. They found object attachment to be more prevalent (53.9%) among American children, intermediate (34.0%) among Korean children living in America, the lowest incidence (18.3%) among Korean based children.

In the United States, 60% of children have at least a mild degree of attachment to a soft, inanimate object some time during their life, and 32% exhibit strong attachment (Passman & Halonen, 1979). The incidence of attachments to soft objects in the Netherlands, New Zealand, and Sweden is comparable to that in the United States. However, just 16% of London children have a special security object.

3.5. Socio-economic status

A number of social factors are thought to influence the formation of a transitional object. Socioeconomic status appears to be linked with transitional object incidence, but the evidence is equivocal. Low incidence was found in rural Italian and lower socio economic class. However, American surveys have failed to find a correlation between economic class and transitional object incidence (Boniface & Graham, 1979; Passman & Halonen, 1979).

Litt (1981) studied two samples of American children between two and five years old. One was a sample of 119 privileged white children, and the other was 166 black children of lower socio-economic status. She found that the incidence of attachment was much higher (77%) among the white children than the black children (46%).

3.6. Cultural child rearing differences

Some studies indicate that co-sleeping is not commonly practised by Caucasian middle to upper class U.S. families (Hong & Townes, 1976; Keener, Zeanah & Anders, 1988; & Morelli, Rogoff, Oppenheim, & Goldsmith, 1992). Most parents did not sleep with their newborn babies on regular basis; rather they slept near their babies in the same room and moved their infants aged three to six months to separate rooms.

Hobara (2003) compared child-rearing practices among the Japanese and American cultures, and found that Japanese children more often slept in the same bed or same room with their mothers, and thus experience greater physical contact with them more than American children at night. These findings suggest that cultural differences in transitional objects may be due to differences in sleeping arrangements between the two cultures. Gaddini & Gaddini (1970) add that in cultures where caregivers are usually available even at night, the children are not likely to be attached to an object (Gaddini & Gaddini, 1970).

It is also observed that children, who sleep in their own beds in their own rooms from infancy onwards, are more likely to develop an attachment to a transitional object than children who share a bed or room with others (Hong & Townes, 1976). Several cross-cultural studies corroborate these findings (Gaddini & Gaddini, 1970; Hong & Townes, 1976; & Litt, 1981). These researchers postulate that the prevalence of an infant's attachment to a transitional object is lower in a culture or social group in which infants receive greater amount of physical contact, and the mother is more physically involved and available when the infant goes to sleep. These observations are consistent with Caudill and Schooler's (1973) observations of Japanese and American childrearing practices. Although they did not study transitional objects per se, they nonetheless observed that middle class American infants played with toys and other objects more than a matched sample of Japanese infants. American mothers appeared to encourage their infants to reach out for toys and other objects more than the Japanese mothers, who are rather involved in direct physical care giving.

In a survey of paediatricians in a large metropolitan area, Lozoff, Wolf and Davis (1984) report that most parents believe, they should avoid physical closeness or body contact with their children during the passage of sleep. In this study, 66 % of U.S. children always slept alone in their own room. Although there was no systematic data collection, 80% of

mothers of those children reported that they engaged in storytelling or singing lullabies, but mostly were not present until their children fell asleep.

On the contrary, parent–infant co-sleeping is common in Japan; only 2% of the Japanese children do not sleep in the same bed with parents (Caudill & Plath, 1966). Japanese children usually lie next to their mothers throughout infancy and early childhood and generally continue to sleep with an extended family member or sibling until the age of 15 (Caudill & Plath, 1966). The Japanese mother is more involved than the American mother is, in the process of her baby going to sleep or waking up (Caudill & Schooler, 1973).

Caudill and Schooler (1973) further add that bedtime is not likely to be a time of struggle, stress or fear for Japanese children who sleep with their parents or other family members throughout their childhood. The notion that many American children experience separation anxiety when falling asleep was supported by the incidence of bedtime struggle reported. Eighty percent of American mothers reported that they had difficulties getting their children to bed, as compared to 60% of Japanese mothers.

It is possible that the observed differences in sleeping arrangements between the cultures could be due to the space available within the households. It is well known that Japanese houses are much smaller than

American houses (Caudill & Schooler, 1973). It seems likely to this observer that it is the result of the different cultural views of an individual's independence within society that influences the different sleeping arrangements in Japan and United States (Caudill & Schooler, 1973).

In the United States, parents believe that the infants are born dependent and need to be socialized into independence. Encouraging independence during infancy is an important goal for many U.S families (Caudill & Schooler, 1973). This common belief is further supported by a study on infants' sleeping arrangements (Morelli, Roggoff, Oppenheim & Goldsmith, 1992) in which 69% of U.S. parents believed that it was important for their infants to develop independence and self-reliance by sleeping apart from them. In addition, some parents indicated their belief that separation at night made daytime separation easier and would help reduce their baby's dependence on them. In this study, some Americans commented that they prefer their children to use a transitional object to soothe themselves than relying on other people for comfort.

In contrast, Japanese parents believed that their infants are born as separate beings who must develop interdependent relationships within the community. Co-sleeping is thought to facilitate this process (Caudill & Weinstein, 1969). In the Japanese culture, children are not always expected to be somewhat dependent, but the nature of this independent

behaviour is thought to change over the course of development. Japanese children are separated from their mothers even at night (Caudill & Weinstein, 1969). Japanese society has a tendency to anticipate such children's dependency at many corners of their development, rather than encouraging their development of a sense on independence (Caudill & Weinstein, 1969).

In Western eyes, Japanese co-sleeping patterns may appear pathogenic, or at least might be taken as a denial of maturation and individuation (Caudill & Plath, 1966). On the other hand, Brazelton (1990) notes that the Japanese think the U.S. culture is rather merciless in pushing small children towards such independence at night. The finding of Caudill and Plath's (1966), study support Brazelton's (1990) characterization of American and Japanese parents' different views of independence and maturation. The age at which Japanese and American parents think that their children should sleep alone was quite different. Japanese mothers consider their children ready for the transition from sleeping with parents to sleeping alone and can handle the stress of nighttime separation when they are around six years old.

On the contrary, U.S. mothers expect their children to sleep alone and cope with the stress when they are around one year old. Moreover, 26% of U.S. mothers reported that children should sleep alone in their own room from birth.

Several cross-cultural studies further suggest that a transitional object is most prevalent in British cultures and low incidence was found in Italian and Israeli populations (Lozoff, Paludetto & Latz, 1985; & Kleiner, 1983, as in Litt, 1981).

Earlier studies of Italy seemed to indicate that children who sleep from birth in a bed and room of their own are more likely to have a transitional object. However, recent British and Japanese studies do not support this association between the location of sleep and transitional object use (Boniface & Graham, 1979; Lozoff, 1985 et al. as in Litt, 1981). Particularly striking in this regard is an Israeli study (Kleiner, 1983) that found no difference in transitional object incidence among children living in traditional kibbutzin with communal sleeping arrangements for children, liberal kibbutzin with family sleeping arrangements and Moshavim with traditional family centred sleeping practices.

3.7. Method of feeding

Whether or not the method of feeding from birth is related is equivocal. Middle and Upper class American children show both high rate of breast-feeding and transitional object attachment. Litt (1981), however, studied cultures where breast-feeding is predominant and found low rates of transitional object attachment. To date, no relationship has been shown

between ordinal position in a family, sex of a child, age of weaning, or number of caretakers and transitional object attachment.

3.8. Developmental trends

In a cross-sectional investigation surveying the mothers of almost 700 children in the United States through their first 63 months of life, Passman and Halonen (1979) examined children's attachments to various classes of objects. The percentage of children who are not attached to any object remains relatively stable throughout the first three years, averaging around 40% with a low of 28% at three months of age. From 33 months, it rises consistently to a high of 84% at 63 months. The number of children having at least a slight attachment to a favourite hard toy (like blocks or a toy truck) remains steady and low through the first four years, averaging approximately 14%, but then drops swiftly toward 10% through 63 months. Attachment to a pacifier peaks early at three months, with 66% reported as having at least some attachment (Passman & Halonen, 1979).

Pacifier usage declines quickly through the first 18 months, after which attachments are extremely unusual (averaging fewer than 3%) through 63 months. Attachment to blankets begins at a later age than it does to pacifiers. Mild attachment to a blanket is rare at 3 months (8%), but increases somewhat through 15 months (22%), peaks rapidly at 18 months (60%), stays near this level through 39 months (57%), tapers off to 40% at

48 months, and falls suddenly to 16% through 63 months. Simultaneous attachment to both a pacifier and a blanket is infrequent; it rises from 4% at 3 months to 12% at 9 months, remains at a relative plateau through 21 months, then drops sharply, averaging about 1% thereafter.

Passman and Halonen (1979) also investigated children's intense attachments to these objects and found similar patterns with respect to age. At three months, 16% was strongly attached to pacifiers. Strong attachment to blankets peaks at 18 and 24 months (32%), stays near this high level through 39 months, and diminishes steadily to 8% through 63 months. Generally, in the United States attachment to various objects are now regarded as conventional throughout the first five years of life.

3.9. Maternal Attitudes

Maternal attitudes and expectations have been thought to influence transitional object attachment. Winnicott (1953) states that the transitional object is created by the infant and not presented by the parent. However, others have pointed out that mothers often take a very active role in maintaining their children's attachments, and hence suspect that mothers may as well be encouraging or engineering the onset of the attachment in some way. This issue has not been directly addressed in the literature.

In a study of issues surrounding termination of transitional object attachments, Litt (1981) found that 21% of parents reported that it had encouraged the attachment originally by either consistently placing a diaper under the infant's head to protect the bedding, or by making sure that a special blanket or a soft toy was always with the child at bedtime or naptime. They also carried these objects on outings away from home so that the child would have familiar objects with him in strange surroundings (Litt, 1981).

3.10. Psychological sequelae of a transitional object

Among the most recent contributions to the literature are a number of studies, which indicate that object attachment in early childhood, and perhaps beyond, is associated with specific psychological and behavioural sequelae. To date, children who insisted on having a specific soft object present at bedtime and other times of stress have been found to have fewer disturbances, to be more independent and generally easier to manage than children who did not insist on such objects (Boniface & Graham, 1979; & Mahalski, 1983).

Objects attached children have also been found to be self confident, outgoing in relation to adults, openly affectionate towards their mothers, and less likely to manifest tension habits under stress (Newson & Newson, 1968; & Mahalski, 1982). In contrast, a study conducted by Sherman,

Hertzig, Austrian and Shapiro (1981) failed to find any significant differences between users and non-users with respect to either behavioural or somatic symptoms, ease of raisability, adaptability or independence.

While such studies represent a useful beginning for understanding the behavioural consequences of transitional objects, the significance of their results is clouded by the fact that their data have been derived from parent interviews and questionnaires rather than from direct samples of child behaviour.

To date, literature reports only one empirical study involving direct personality assessment of transitional object and non-transitional object users. Cohen and Clark (1984) administered the Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire to two groups of college freshmen, whose self-reports of being either former transitional object users or non-users were confirmed by parent reports. Results indicate a strong relationship between early transitional object attachment and later characteristics of excitability, restlessness, and impatience (Cohen & Clark, 1984).

Transitional object users endorsed items that reflect admissions of feeling tense, difficulty calming down, low tolerance for criticism, ease in anger and inability to hold back remarks. In contrast, the absence of an early transitional object attachment was related to traits of aloofness and detachment, as well as tendencies to be rather rigid, precise, and objective.

Non-transitional object users endorsed items that suggest preferences for living and working in situations that do not require a great deal of interpersonal activity.

The authors suggest that the paradoxical relationship between the early use of an object traditionally conceptualized as a soothing structure - enhancing device, and later characteristics of restlessness and impatience, may be due to tendencies towards high arousal states and greater capacity for intensity of experience or possibly to greater willingness to disclose negative aspects of oneself (Cohen & Clark, 1984).

The finding of reserved traits in non-transitional object users may represent a failure of internal capacities for self. It may also reflect positive features such as self-sufficiency and resourcefulness (Cohen & Clark, 1984).

3.11. Attachment theory

Psychoanalyst John Bowlby introduced attachment theory in the late 1950s. In the following two decades, numerous other researchers elaborated upon this theory, which integrates viewpoints from psychoanalysis, cognitive psychology, systems theory and etiology (Holmes, 2001; Cassidy & Shaver, 1999; & Levy, 2000).

Attachment theory is a theory about the nature of all human beings. It also touches on several critical elements of an individual's emotional life, the tendency to form attachment bonds; the role of the caregiver; the anxiety and anger which separation and loss provoke; and the nature of grieving for the loss of an attachment (Manassis, 2001). This theory also categorizes the nature of a child's first attachment as either secure or anxious and attempts to describe the impact of these patterns on subsequent behaviour and relationships (Manassis, 2001).

Attachment theory states that a child's first relationship is a love relationship that will have profound long-lasting effects on an individual's subsequent development. Closeness to the attachment figure provides protection and a psychological sense of security (Holmes, 2001; & Susman-Stillman, Kalkose, Engeland & Waldman, 1996). Attachments should lay a good foundation for being able to form other secure relationships, to seek support when needed, and to draw strengths from the support, which is given.

A caregiver who is reliably available and responsive to a baby's needs forms the basis for secure attachment, for competence in exploring the environment and forming other relationships, and for developing self-esteem (Holmes, 2001).

Within attachment theory, representational models play a significant role. These unconscious structures are mental representations of the self and others, based on early experiences in first relationships (Holmes, 2001). They set the stage for interactions with new social partners and have long-term consequences for shaping personality, organizing behaviour, and developing close relationships. Bowlby (1988) asserted that it is uncommon for a person to hold conflicting internal models of an important relationship. One model may develop largely from a child's direct experience with a caregiver; while another may result from cognitive input, for example, statements from the parents that do not support the experience.

Changes in attachment behaviour and in one's representational models of attachment relationships can develop from developmental changes and/or changes in experience, especially with another attachment figure (Lidz, 1976). Changes in a child's attachment can also result from changes in the parent's behaviour due to family circumstances, such as the birth of a sibling, death, divorce, marriage, an economic setback or advance, relocation to a new neighbourhood, a child's entry into child care or school, involvement of a social worker or psychotherapy (Lidz, 1976).

In the 1960s, Mary Ainsworth, one of Bowlby's colleagues, conducted seminal longitudinal studies of 26 pairs of mothers and babies in their natural setting (Holmes, 1993). Trained observers visited the subjects in

their homes in Baltimore and Maryland, for four hours at a time, every three weeks during the first year making notes on the infants' behaviours and mothers' sensitivity in responding to the infants (Holmes, 1993). At the time, these babies were approaching their first birthday, Ainsworth and her colleague, Barbara Wittig, developed the Strange Situation, a semi-standardized laboratory procedure for observing babies' responses to being in a new place, meeting an adult female stranger, being separated from the mother for a brief period, and being left alone in an unfamiliar place for a brief period. At age one, 23 of the 26 infants in the Baltimore study were among the 106 babies on which Ainsworth reported (Holmes, 2001). This method proved to be a rich source of data about attachment patterns, and has since been used to assess thousands of infants. In this technique, highly experienced coders use scales to rate the intensity of interactive behaviour in four areas: proximity and contact seeking, contact maintaining, resistance and avoidance. Then they categorized the infants' patterns of either attachment behaviour as secure or anxious (Holmes, 2001).

Ainsworth (1985) described three major categories of attachment: secure, anxious/avoidant, and anxious/ambivalent. After years of additional research by many investigators, Mary Main and Judith Solomon in 1986 identified a fourth pattern: anxious/disorganized/disoriented (Holmes, 2001; Ainsworth, 1985).

3.12. Mothers attachment style

Bowlby (1958) studied the attachment of infants to mothers and concluded that early separation of infants from their mothers has severe negative effects on children's emotional and intellectual development. He described the attachment behaviour, which develops during the first year of life, as the maintenance of physical contact between the mother and the child when the child is hungry, frightened or in distressed (Bowlby, 1969).

Patterns of attachment vary among babies, for example, some babies signal or cry less than others. Sensitive responsiveness to infants such as a cuddling baby when it cries causes infants to cry less in later months (Bowlby, 1969). Close bodily contact with the mother when the baby signals for her is also associated with the growth of self-reliance, rather than clinging dependence, as the baby grows older (Bowlby, 1969 & 1958).

Ainsworth also confirmed that attachment serves to reduce anxiety (Ainsworth, 1985). What she called the secure base enables a child to move away from the attachment figure and explore the environment. Inanimate objects such as a teddy bear or a blanket (called a transitional object by Donald Winnicott); also serve as a secure base in cases where the mother is unavailable (Ainsworth, 1985). According to Ainsworth (1985), maternal sensitivity and responsiveness are the main determinants

of secure attachment. However, when the attachment is insecure, the type of insecurity (avoidant, anxious, ambivalent) is determined by infant temperament, and the child is more likely to seek comfort from other things such as transitional objects (Bowlby, 1988; & Ainsworth, 1985).

The present study focuses on the prevalence of a transitional object. It also focuses on how mothers' child rearing practices affect development and attachment to a transitional object. The inclusion of a mother's characteristics as a factor in the development of a transitional object is influenced by the literature that points to the role that parenting plays in personality development. In the present study, the attachment style of the mother (secure, avoidant, anxious/ambivalent) is explored as a factor in the child's development and attachment to a transitional object.

3.13. Hypotheses

- There will be low incidence of transitional object use in young children at Eisleben village.
- Mothers' child rearing practices will influence children's attachment and development of a transitional object.
- Mothers' attachment styles, e.g., secure, avoidant, anxious ambivalent, disorganized, disoriented, influence children's attachment and development of transitional objects.

Chapter 4

Methodology

4.1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the research design that was used, research procedure that was followed, and the manner in which data were collected and analysed.

4.2. Research design

The present study used both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The main aim was to investigate the incidence of transitional object use, as well as exploring how child rearing practices and the attachment style of the mother influence the child's transitional object attachment.

4.3. Participants and sampling method

The present researcher selected a sample of 100 mothers residing at Eisleben Village. The mother should have at least one young child between six months and two years. The sample enabled the present researcher to draw more representative and accurate predictions.

The present researcher used non-probability sampling in a form of haphazard sampling. Non-probability sampling gave the present

researcher the freedom to select her own sample. In the current study, haphazard sampling was important because the present researcher used any mother who was willing to participate.

4.4. Data collection

The present researcher collected data using a scheduled structured interview. This was helpful because the present researcher could ensure that all questions were understood and responded.

4.5. Data collection instruments

The present researcher used the following instruments:

The questionnaires used to collect data consisted of both standardized and self-generated questions; all of them relevant to the subject of the study.

The self-generated questions are based on issues common in the literature.

The instruments used to collect data are explained below.

4.5.1. The prevalence of a transitional object

To investigate the prevalence of a transitional object, a 15-item questionnaire obtained from a related study (Hobara, 2003) was used (seen Appendix A). The questionnaire included varied questions generated from the literature (e.g., Triebenbacher, 1997; & Sherman, Hertzog, Austrian, &

Shapiro, 1981). The questionnaire helped in obtaining information regarding background, incidence of transitional object attachment, type of object, characteristics of attachment behaviour, child-rearing practices, as well as a mother's behaviour and attitude towards the object. The questionnaire was written and administered in English.

4.5.2. The mother's attachment style

To investigate a mother's attachment style, the present researcher used two questionnaires to increase the reliability and validity of measurement.

The questionnaires are;

i. The relationship questionnaire

To study the attachment style of a mother, the present researcher used the relationship questionnaire (see Appendix B) that describes the person's attachment style, e.g. Personality style A- It is easy for me to become emotionally close to others. I am comfortable depending on them and having them depends on me. I do not worry about being alone or having others not accept me. Personality Style B- I am uncomfortable getting close to others. I want emotionally close relationships, but I find it difficult to trust others completely, or to depend on them. I worry that I will be hurt if I allow myself (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991).

Attachment styles are based on adult attachment research (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991), which initially identified four styles of relating to others. For example, Styles A and B mentioned above correspond to the secure and fearful-avoidant attachment patterns, respectively. Styles C and D correspond to the preoccupied and dismissing-avoidant attachment patterns, respectively. The method of assigning attachment styles yields styles that are not correlated.

Internal consistency of the questionnaire cannot be calculated. However, test retest reliability over an 8 months period varied from .49 to .71 (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1990). Except for Hazan and Shaver's (1987) prototype questionnaire, this is the briefest questionnaire to administer and score.

ii. Adult attachment scale

The Adult attachment questionnaire is a 13 item, self-report questionnaire measuring the attachment style of individuals, e.g. I find it relatively easy to get close to others (see Appendix C). It is responded to on a Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 7 (strongly disagree). The questions are based on Hazan and Schafer's (1987) measure of attachment. Simpson (1990) constructed three indexes from the 13 items, and named them Anxious Attachment Style Index, Avoidant Attachment Style Index and Secure Attachment Style Index, with Cronbach alphas of 0.59 and 0.51, respectively.

4.6. Procedure

Written permission to conduct the study was obtained from the University of Limpopo Ethics Committee. The community that the present researcher used consists of five different sections. The present researcher went to the tribal authority for each section to get permission to collect data. The purpose of the visit was to make people in the community know about the study and welcome her in their homes.

The present researcher then went to the homes of the participants. Participants also gave written permission to participate in the study. Before administration of the questionnaires, the participants were informed of the purpose of the research and allowed to ask questions regarding the study. Issues pertaining to anonymity, honesty, confidentiality and voluntary participation were agreed upon in line with the research ethical standards.

Conducting interviews took much time; however, it was advantageous because the present researcher could ensure that all questions were responded. The response rate was satisfactory. This might have been influenced by clear articulation of the research ethics.

4.7. Data analysis

The collected data was analysed using the computer programme called the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science). The analysis provided frequencies and percentages, and the findings are presented in tables and figures.

Chapter 5

Results

5.1. Participants' characteristics

Participants were mothers of children aged between six months and two years. Of the hundred children, 49 were males and 51 were females. It is common for studies to use the social class position of the participants to determine the status of the family. In order to estimate the social-class position of the participating mothers in this study, a combined index of education, income, and occupation related to the one used by Hobara (2003) was utilized.

The educational level of the mothers was distributed as follows: 5% primary school education, 78% secondary school education, and 17% tertiary-level education. Total monthly income of the families of the mothers was estimated on a four-point scale. The income levels were distributed as follows: 92% in the category of "R500-R2999" or less, 1% in the category of "R3000-R4999", 5% in the category of "R5000-R7999" and 2% in category of "R8000 and above."

Information about the employment status of the participating mothers and fathers of the respective children was solicited through a question that

asked their employment status. Eighty three percent of the mothers reported that they were unemployed, 15% were employed, and 2% were self-employed. With regard to the fathers of the children, 56% were employed, 32% were unemployed, and 12% were self-employed. Families of participants were within lower (83%) and middle (17%) socio-economic status.

5.2. Variables of the study

This section presents and describes the results of the main variables of the study. Mothers were asked several questions pertaining to their children’s use of transitional objects. Each of the participating mothers continued to answer the rest of the questionnaire even if they indicated that their child was not attached to a transitional object. During the interview, each of the mothers was given a description of a transitional object, and thereafter was asked if her child showed any indication that, he/she had one. Table 1 (below) shows that children’s attachment to a transitional object was an uncommon phenomenon. Ninety-four of the participants reported that their children are not attached to a transitional object.

Table 1. Prevalence of children’s attachment to a transitional object (N = 100)

1. Prevalence of transitional object Attachment	Yes = 6	No = 94
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The mothers were also questioned about their styles of parenting. Findings of the mothers' child-rearing and related practices are contained in Table 2 below.

Table 2: The mothers' child-rearing and related practices.*

1. Sleeping arrangements:		
a. In own room	=	2
b. Sleeps with parents.	=	72
c. Sleep in room shared with others	=	26
2. Type of primary caretaker		
a. Mother	=	66
b. Grand mother	=	30
c. Baby sitter	=	3
3. Hours of mothers availability		
a. Day time	=	17
b. Night time	=	3
c. Day and night time	=	80
4. Method of feeding		
a. Breast	=	78
b. Bottle	=	13
c. Breast and bottle	=	9

* For all the variables N=100

Seventy two percent of the mothers reported that they sleep with their children in the same room. Twenty-six percent sleep in a room shared with others, and 2% sleep in their own room (Table 2.1). The biological mother, who in this case is the primary caregiver, is available only during the day for 17% of the children; available only during the night for 3% of

the children; and is available during the day and night for 80% of the children (Table 2, 3). Table 2, 2 further shows that, 66% of the participants' children are cared for by the biological mother, 30% by the grandmother, and 4% by the baby sitter. Breast-feeding as shown in Table 2.4 appear to be higher (78%) than bottle feeding (13%) among the participants. The bottle and breast-feeding is the lowest (9%).

The mothers' attachment style was also explored as a factor that can influence children's attachment to a transitional object. Four classifications were used to describe the mothers' personality style, namely, secure, avoidant, preoccupied and dismissing attachments. The results of this study indicate that, 47% of the biological mothers have secure attachments with their children, 21% has avoidant attachment style, 25% has a preoccupied attachment style, and 7% has dismissing attachments. The mothers' attachment was expected to influence a child's transitional object attachment, however, no relationship was found.

5.3. Mothers comments on transitional objects

At the end of the questionnaire, the mothers were asked to make additional comments. Most of them did not make any comment however, those who did, indicated that attachment to objects was a natural phenomenon during the course of development. They pointed out that transitional objects were

necessary and healthy as they help children to individuate and become independent.

Two of the mothers whose children had a transitional object indicated that the transitional object keeps the child busy throughout the day, as the child can communicate and even play with it. One mother indicated that her child developed a transitional object when she was experiencing changes in her life, i.e., going to preschool.

Chapter 6

Discussion

6.1. Introduction

In the current chapter, the present researcher discusses the results in terms of the original hypotheses and with regard to the literature that has been reviewed. The meaning, the implication of the study results, and the congruence or lack of congruence with the results of other studies, are all explored.

6.2. Prevalence of transitional object attachment

The results of this study shown that the majority of the participants are not attached to a transitional object (94%). This finding follows a trend in the literature, as well as supporting the hypothesis that, there is low prevalence of transitional object attachment in non-Western cultures. Several studies do corroborate these findings. Newson and Newson (1968) conducted the first Western based study of the incidence of transitional object attachment. They found that 31% of a sample of Nottingham four year olds insisted on taking a cuddly toy or blanket to bed. Gaddini and Gaddini (1970) also found that the incidence of a transitional object was 4.9% in a sample of 686 rural Italian children,

31.1% in a sample of 450 children living in Rome, and 61.5% among 52 Anglo Saxon children living in Rome.

Hong and Townes (1976) studied the incidence of object attachment in three groups of children namely, Americans, Koreans in Korea and Koreans living in America. The average age of children in their sample was close to three years. They found object attachment to be more prevalent (53.9%) among American children, intermediate (34.0%) among Korean children living in America, and a lower incidence (18.3%) among Korean children.

6.3. Socioeconomic status

A combined index of education, income, and occupation obtained from a similar study (Hobara, 2003) was used to measure the socio-economic status of the participants.

Seventy-eight percent of the participants in the current study ended their studies at secondary school level. Most of them dropped out of school before completing matric, and this makes it difficult for them to get employment that will give them a descent income and thus affording toys for their children. They get an income of between R 500-2999 (92%) and less, and belong to households of more than five family members, which

include grandparents, uncles and aunts, as well as brothers and sisters. Most of the income that the mothers get is from the government's social grant system that gives them only R180 per month, per child. The income is mostly used for necessities such as food and clothing.

In the study done by Hobara (2003), 28% of Japanese mothers are employed and their level of income is high by 30%, compared to that of participants in the current study. The level of unemployment among the participants, as well as fathers of participants' children, is also very high. The Japanese families seem to have very similar characteristics to the families in the current study; however, the socioeconomic status seems to differ.

Litt (1981) who studied two samples of American children between two and five years old support these findings. One was a sample of 119 privileged white children, and the other was 166 black children of lower socio-economic status. She found that the incidence of object attachment was much higher (77%) among the white children than the black children (46%).

6.4. Child rearing practices

The second factor influencing the incidence of transitional object attachment is how the mothers rear their children. To measure the child

rearing practices, four classifications similar to the ones used in Hobaras' study were used.

Sleeping arrangements, as the first of the four classifications of the child rearing practices, have an impact on children's attachment to a transitional object. In the current study, the majority of the children sleep with their parents on the same bed, a few of them sleep in a room shared with others, and an even lesser number sleeps in their own rooms (Table 2, 1).

Children in the current study have little reason to become attached to an object because most of them usually have an adult present when they fall asleep at night. They could touch or cling to the mothers' body, hair, or clothing to alleviate anxiety. Bedtime is not likely to be the time of stress for them as they sleep with their parents or other family members throughout childhood.

Hobaras'(2003) study in Japan supports these findings. He indicated that Japanese children more often than not slept in the same bed with their mothers and seems to experience greater physical contact (Hobara, 2003). Japanese children usually lie next to their mothers throughout infancy and early childhood, and generally continue to sleep with an extended family member or sibling until the age of 15 (Caudill & Plath, 1966). Like mothers in the current study, Japanese mothers are involved in the process of their child going to sleep and waking up (Caudill & Schooler, 1973).

Gaddini and Gaddini (1970) add that in cultures where caregivers are usually available even at night, the children are not likely to be attached to an object. Although there was no formal data collection in the current study, 90% of the mothers reported that they were usually with their children (cuddle them) until they fell asleep.

Hong and Townes (1976) add that children who sleep in their own beds in their own rooms from infancy on are more likely to develop an attachment to a transitional object than children who share a bed or room with others. Several other studies corroborate these findings (Litt, 1981; Gaddini & Gaddini, 1970; & Caudill & Plath, 1966).

However, it is possible that the observed differences in sleeping arrangements could be due to the space available within the households. Observations made in the current study have shown that most families have very small houses and live with extended family members. Japanese houses are also reported to be much smaller (Caudill & Schooler, 1973).

The second classification of child rearing practices is the type of primary caregiver. In the current study, the biological mother cares for the majority of the children. The grandmother cares for a very small percentage, and the baby sitter cares for an even lesser number (Table 2, 2). Mothers in the current study reported that they do not need baby

sitters, as they are unemployed and are available most of the time. They also reported that they live with extended family members who are secondary attachment figures to the child.

The participants (90%) also reported that, when they are not available, the grandmother cares for the child. The grandmother is normally familiar to the child, and in most cases lives in the same house or within close proximity to where the child is on daily basis.

Several studies corroborate the findings of the current study (Litt, 1981; Hobara, 2003; & Caudill & Schooler, 1973). In Hobara's study, 86% of Japanese children were primarily cared for by the mothers, 10% by grandmothers, and only 2% by a babysitter.

The third classification, which is a mother's availability to her child, was used as one of the child rearing practices. The results of this study show that the majority of the mothers are available day and night (Table 2, 3). This evidence suggests that contact with the mother is related to transitional object use. There are factors that influence the mothers' availability. The first one is the fact that the majority of the mothers are unemployed. The second factor is the meaning of the term availability, which was not clearly defined. The term availability might have two meanings; one is that the mother is available emotionally for the child and

the other is that she is physically present to the child. This study may have missed a valuable clue to understanding the relationship between transitional object usage and the mothers' availability to the child. This issue requires further investigation employing a direct means of questioning and observations of mother- child interaction.

The method of feeding, which is the last classification of the child rearing practices, has been reported to have an impact on attachment to a transitional object. It is reported in the current study that 78% of children are breast-fed, 13% is bottle-fed, and 9% of the children are fed by both (Table 2, 4). It is reported that in cultures where breast-feeding is predominant, low rates of transitional object attachment are found (Gaddini & Gaddini, 1971; and Litt, 1981).

6.5. Transitional object attachment

Six percent of the participants reported having a transitional object in this study. Four of the six participants reported that they are attached to teddy bears while two reported being attached to blankets. In other studies as well, attachment to teddy bears is reported to be higher than attachment to blankets. Hobara's (2003) study reported that, in the Japanese sample the most popular transitional object was the stuffed animal. Litt (1981) also made the same observations in his study of two paediatric populations, one

from a public and the other from a private clinic. He found that in the private group, a blanket was the most popular object of attachment, whereas in the public group, dolls and teddy bears were frequently chosen.

Hong and Townes (1976) add that when children become increasingly aware of inanimate objects in their environment, a blanket was easily attached to because it has always been in the crib since birth. A blanket might help to reduce anxiety of separation from the mother, handle frustration of unmet neediness, or relieve tension of being alone, especially at night.

Hong and Townes (1976) also added that attachment to soft toys might serve a different function from blankets because they are used predominantly when the child was awake. The soft toys might represent play objects rather than attachment objects. Whether the soft toy and the blanket have a different meaning and function for the participants of this study remains inconclusive.

6.6. The mothers' feeling and attitude towards transitional objects

The mothers' feelings and attitude towards a transitional object is also explored in this study. Mothers whose children have a transitional object reported that they had no problem with the transitional object. Winnicott

(1953) states that a child selects the transitional object, however, a parent's positive or negative conscious or unconscious expectations towards the special object might affect development of transitional object attachment. The questionnaire did not contain questions regarding ways in which parents might play a role as facilitator or interpreter of a child's transitional object attachment.

6.7. Mothers' additional comments

At the end of the questionnaire, mothers had the opportunity to make any additional comments. Even though most mothers (90%) did not comment, those who did indicated that attachment to objects was a natural phenomenon during the course of development. They pointed out that transitional objects were necessary and healthy because it helps the child to individuate and become independent.

Two of the mothers whose children have a transitional object indicated that the transitional object keeps the child busy throughout the day, as the child can communicate and even play with it. One mother indicated that her children developed a transitional object attachment when she was experiencing changes in her life, i.e., going to preschool.

6.8. Mothers' personality style

The current study also explored another rare factor that is in relation to transitional object attachment, viz, how maternal-infant attachment influence attachment to transitional object. Even though most of the mothers (47%) reported that they had secure attachments with their children, it does not seem to affect transitional object attachment as indicated by the incidence reported.

Studies by Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, and Wall (1978) produced very little data, regarding specific patterns of mother-infant attachment and their implications on emotional and cognitive development. Ainsworth et.al' (1978) Strange Situation technique was used to investigate transitional object behaviour. This is designed for uses with children in the first two years, the very time at which transitional object attachment typically develops.

The strength of blanket attachment relative to mother attachment, and the effectiveness of the blanket as an agent for promoting exploration in a novel environment, has been studied using methods similar to the strange situation (Passman & Adams, 1982; & Passman & Weisberg, 1975).

The literature to date is devoid of attempts to study whether specific patterns of maternal infant attachment are related to the development of transitional object attachment.

The fact that there has been no cross fertilization between such obviously related areas of child research further validates Hong and Townes' (1976) earlier lament regarding a general lack of collaborative work among the various disciplines seeking to understand human development. Transitional object theory and Attachment theory would appear to share an unusually rich potential for complimenting and validating each other. For example, Winnicott's (1953) assertion that transitional object attachment cannot develop in the absence of a good enough mother-child relationship, might find configuration through studies that explored whether transitional object attached children demonstrate a secure pattern of maternal attachment in the Strange Situation, or when they have mothers who are preoccupied, avoidant or dismissing attachment patterns.

An examination of some findings regarding personality correlates of transitional object attachment within the context of maternal infant attachment theory might enlighten not only the realm of transitional object and attachment theories, but the general field of human personality development as well.

6.9. Conclusion

Winnicott (1953) states that, transitional object attachment cannot develop unless a child has experienced the care of a good enough mother. A good enough mother consistently fulfils the child's needs for comfort and provides the child with a holding environment (e.g., high degree of empathic environment). Children inevitably experience mother's involuntary separations as empathic failures but generally come to tolerate and accept these failures and develop self-soothing capacity if sufficient security and constancy are offered.

The transitional object and transitional phenomena serve as an adaptive self-soothing device that provides security and reduces stress when the caregiver is no longer available at all times to satisfy the child's needs. Moreover, the transitional object seems to arise in the context of the infant being left alone, particularly at bedtime (Applegate, 1989).

Thus, it would be consistent that good enough mothering would promote transitional object use in a cultural context where the view of individual independence promotes sleeping alone in infancy, and makes it less likely in another cultural context, such as that of the current study.

In conclusion, the results of the present study indicate low levels of transitional object attachment at Eisleben village, Limpopo Province.

Factors that have shown to have a direct impact on transitional object attachment are the child rearing practices as well as the socioeconomic status of the majority of participants. The children in the current study were less inclined to need transitional objects because they experience fewer separation incidences from the mother. In accordance with other studies, it is suggested that in cultures where children's independence is not reinforced, the prevalence of transitional object attachment will be lesser.

6.10. Limitations of the study

The fact that the data in this study were gathered from only one community may be viewed as a limitation of this study. Another limitation is the short time in which the data was collected. The validity of using English to study transitional object attachment might have caused misunderstandings of the questions presented. Conducting the interviews in English was nevertheless an effective method of obtaining data.

The results of the present study do not have any group differences. The focus was on comparing the results of the current study with the theories and the available literature of related studies.

Another limitation of this study is the problem experienced with relevant norms and cutting points of foreign instruments, such as the Relationship Questionnaire and the Adult Attachment Questionnaire. This difficulty is facing research in South Africa, especially in rural areas where there is a high rate of illiteracy.

The sleeping arrangements made for a child appear to be positively related to whether or not a child develops an attachment to a transitional object, this is obviously one influential factor. For the population that the present researcher used, baby sitters are often beyond economic reach and thus children would be left at home with members of the extended family who have shared in caretaking from early stages in a child's life.

The above-mentioned factors are not addressed in the current study and remain to be investigated through direct means of mother-child interaction.

6.11. Recommendations

A high need for studies in the area of transitional object attachment is clear, as the present researcher did not get any studies conducted in South Africa.

It would be interesting for future studies to examine whether or not parents' attitude and personality style, both inter-culturally, are associated with children's transitional object attachment.

Instruments such as the Relationship Questionnaire and the Adult Attachment Questionnaire could be used effectively where participants are highly literate and live a Western lifestyle. The questionnaire can produce reliable and valid results.

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APPENDIX A

TRANSITIONAL OBJECT ATTACHMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Transitional object attachment Questionnaire

PART 1

Section 1: Demographic Information

The researcher fills in the assigned identification number, and tick the appropriate response with an (X) as they are provide by the interviewee.

Respondent identification number:

1. Do you have at least one young baby? If yes, please answer below

2. Where do you currently stay?

3. How old are you?

4. What is your occupation?

5. If you are employed, how much (roughly) do you earn per month?

6. What is your highest educational level?

7. What does the father of your child do for a living??

What is your total family income (salaries, other earnings etc,) per month?

9. How many people live in the house where the baby is raised?

10. Do you buy your child toys?

(If yes, describe the type of toys and how often)

11. Please tick (☒) all the people who live in your home:

Biological Mother	Biological Father	Step-mother	Step-father	Grand parents
Uncle/s & Aunt/s	Brother/s	Sister/s	Cousins	Lodgers
Husband/boyfriend Uncle/s & Aunt/s	Husband/boyfriend's Brother/s	Husband/boyfriend's Sister/s	Husband friend's Cousins	Mother in law
Father-in-law	Other			

12. Do you have your own private bedroom?

Yes	No
-----	----

13. How many children do you have?

14. How would you briefly describe your child?

15. Would you say that at birth, your child was?

- A difficult child, e.g., cried a lot, demanded to eat and sleep on schedule.
- A laissez-faire child, e.g., did not have a specific time to eat or sleep
- An easy to handle child, e.g., did not cry, had regular sleeping, waking and eating times
- Other

SECTION 2: TRANSITIONAL OBJECT

The questionnaire administrator explains that the questions that follow refer to the mother's child and his/her attachment to a transitional object, and presents the following definition of transitional object to the mother:

"The term transitional object refers to special objects that children become attached to, and keep as their possessions. These objects commonly include teddy bears, blankets, diapers, or any other soft articles, which children become emotionally attached to, and hug while falling asleep or feeling upset. Transitional objects are not the objects that other people bring to the child for certain purposes, such as playthings that the mother uses during feeding.

INSTRUCTION

This part of the questionnaire consists of 17 questions; the researcher will indicate by a cross (X) on behalf of the interviewee the option that applies to her child.

1. How old is your child?

6-8 Months	9-11 Months	12-14 Months	15-24 Months
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2. What is the sex of your child?

Boy	Girl
-----	------

3. Birth order

First born	Second born	Third born	Fourth & above
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4. Does your child have a transitional object?

Yes	No
-----	----

5. What type of object were they attached to?

Piece of cloth

Pillow

Blanket

Teddy bear

Stuffed animal

Diaper

Mother's body part (e.g., hair, finger, face, breast, an

6. At what times is the child likely to use the transitional object?

Bedtime	
Naptime	
When in a strange place	
When the child is tired	
When the child is unhappy and distressed	
When the mother is away, out of sight	
Other: (explain)	

7. At what age was the baby attached to the object?

0-3 months	6-8 months	9-11 months	12-14 months	15-24 month
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8. What was happening in the Child's life at that time?

9. <u>Child rearing practices</u>		
a. At which times is the person responsible for looking after the baby available?		
Mostly in the daytime	Mostly during the night.	During the night and during the day
Some specific arrangement: (explain)		
b. What is the main method of feeding the baby?		
Breast feeding	Bottle feeding	Breast and bottle feeding

c. Where does your baby sleep at night?			
In his own room	In his parents' room	In a room shared by others	
d. Who is the person who is primarily responsible for looking after the baby			
His mother	His grandmother	A baby-sitter	Other:

10. Make your choice as to how is the Mother's behaviour towards the object.	
The mother uses the transitional object as part of feeding activity	
The mother restricts the child's use of the object	
Other	

11. Mother's feeling towards the object	
Healthy	
Some kind of healthy	
No relation	
Some kind of difficulty	
Difficulty	

APPENDIX B
RELATIONSHIP QUESTIONNAIRE(RQ)

The Relationship Questionnaire (RQ)

Following are four general relationship styles that people often report. The researcher will place a checkmark next to the letter corresponding to the style that best describes the interviewee or is closest to the way she is.

___ A. It is easy for me to become emotionally close to others. I am comfortable depending on them and having them depends on me. I do not worry about being alone or having others not accept me.

___ B. I am uncomfortable getting close to others. I want emotionally close relationships, but I find it difficult to trust others completely, or to depend on them. I worry that I will be hurt if I allow myself to become too close to others.

___ C. I want to be completely emotionally intimate with others, but I often find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like. I am uncomfortable being without close relationships, but I sometimes worry that others do not value me as much as I value them.

___ D. I am comfortable without close emotional relationships. It is very important to me to feel independent and self-sufficient, and I prefer not to depend on others or have others depend on me.

APPENDIX C

ADULT ATTACHMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Adult attachment questionnaire

The following statements refer to how the participants prefer to relate to people who are close to them. **The researcher will indicate by cross(X) the level to which the participant strongly agree with the statements.**

1. I find it relatively easy to get close to others									
Strongly agree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly disagree	
2. I am not very comfortable having to depend on other people									
Strongly agree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly disagree	
3. I am comfortable having others depend on me									
Strongly agree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly disagree	
4. I rarely worry about being abandoned by others									
Strongly agree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly disagree	
5. I don't like people getting too close to me									
Strongly agree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly disagree	
6. I am somewhat uncomfortable being too close to others									
Strongly agree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly disagree	
7. I find it difficult to trust others completely									
Strongly agree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly disagree	
8. I am nervous when anyone gets too close to me									
Strongly agree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly disagree	
9. Others often want me to be more intimate than I feel comfortable being									
Strongly agree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly disagree	
10. Others often are reluctant to get as close as I would like									
Strongly agree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly disagree	
11. I often worry that my partner(s) don't really love me									
Strongly agree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly disagree	
12. I rarely worry about my partner(s) leaving me									
Strongly agree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly disagree	
13. I often want to merge completely with others, and this desire sometimes scares them away									
Strongly agree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly disagree	