

**THE INVOLVEMENT OF FAITH BASED ORGANIZATIONS
WITH SEXUALLY ABUSED ADOLESCENT FEMALES IN THE
PAARL COMMUNITY**

By

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I declare that ‘*The involvement of faith based organizations with sexually abused adolescent females in the Paarl community*’ is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Melanie Thirion

Date

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*This research is dedicated to every adolescent female that carries the
secret of sexual abuse in her heart*

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SUMMARY

THE INVOLVEMENT OF FAITH BASED ORGANIZATIONS WITH SEXUALLY ABUSED ADOLESCENT FEMALES IN THE PAARL COMMUNITY

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This research explores reasons why congregations in Paarl community are not involved, as faith based organizations (FBO's), with the support of female adolescent victims of sexual abuse.

The researcher conducts a literature review concerning the developmental phase of adolescence and issues regarding sexuality that emerge from this phase. The researcher discusses the nature and effects of sexual abuse and statistics regarding this abuse. Different church leaderships' statements regarding the prevalence of sexual abuse are also viewed.

Based on the literature study, empirical research is conducted to explore why congregations in Paarl are not involved as FBO's with the support of adolescent female victims of sexual abuse. The researcher uses basic individual interviews with several leaders of congregations in Paarl to gather the data needed.

Lastly, the data is analyzed and discussed. Based on this discussion, the researcher offers some guidelines for congregations to become more involved as FBO's with adolescent female victims of sexual abuse.

KEY CONCEPTS: SEXUAL ABUSE, ADOLESCENT FEMALES, VICTIMS, PAARL COMMUNITY, CONGREGATIONS, FAITH BASED COMMUNITIES, REASONS FOR INVOLVEMENT, AWARENESS, SILENCE, GUIDELINES FOR INVOLVEMENT.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION TO THE RESEARCH

1.1 Introduction

The Unit for Religious and Development Research (URDR), as part of the University of Stellenbosch, has taken the initiative in 2001 to research social development needs of local communities. This was done in order to empower congregations, as part of the family of faith based organizations (FBO's)¹, to play an effective role in addressing and meeting the identified needs. The following research on congregations' involvement, as FBO's, with the support² of adolescent female victims of sexual abuse, aims to contribute to the URDR's initiative in the Paarl community.

1.2 Background and motivation

The phenomenon of sexual abuse has clouded human existence throughout history. In his book, *Child Sexual Abuse and the Churches*, Parkinson (1997:14) highlighted two moments in the history of male and female sexual abuse. Concerning male sexual abuse, he explains: "... we can read about the sexual abuse of boys in the classical literature of the Greeks and Romans, where young boys were often spoken of as a source of sexual pleasure...*The Didache*, a commentary on the Gospels from the early second century, indicates its awareness of the problem when it provides a trilogy of prohibitions concerning the sins of the flesh: 'Thou shalt not commit adultery; thou shalt not commit fornication; thou shalt not seduce young boys.'"

¹ This concept is clarified in the section on key concepts, page 11.

² This concept is clarified in the section on key concepts, page 11.

In an overview of the history of the sexual abuse of females, Parkinson (1997:14) draws on the Bible for examples and highlights 2 Samuel 13, the narrative of Tamar being raped by her half-brother Amnon: “*He [Amnon] then seized and raped her [Tamar]. The Bible records that after he did so, he ‘hated her more than he loved her’. Amnon had believed that he loved Tamar, but he loved her only with his eyes, and his feelings towards her after he had raped her showed his real contempt for her. Before her rape, he had gone to great lengths in order to be alone with her. After the rape, he wanted to get her out of his presence as quickly as possible.*” In a concluding remark about this story, Parkinson (1997:15) voices the dynamic of sexual abuse: “*Amnon’s sexual gratification lasted a moment, but Tamar’s shame lasted a lifetime.*”

Little has changed over the ages and sexual abuse still occurs every day. It is claimed to be a monumental and formidable problem which knows no age, religious, socio-economic, racial, and ethnic or gender boundaries (Holmes & Holmes, 2002: 6).

The late 1970’s study done by David Finkelhor (in Parkinson, 1997:17) on the subject of sexual abuse in the United States of America is still regarded as one of the best-known landmark researches on the subject. Although this study mainly focused on the sexual abuse of children, it highlighted some findings on the adolescent female victims. Parkinson (1997:17) explains that Finkelhor interviewed approximately 800 students about their experiences of sexual molestation as children: “*He found that 19 per cent (%) of women reported some such experience in which the perpetrator was an adult or a much older adolescent.*” Parkinson (1997:17) also elaborates on a similar study done in Australia, by Robert and Juliette Goldman. The results from this study revealed that nearly 28% of women participating reported some kind of abusive sexual experience before the age of sixteen.

Holmes and Holmes (2002:6) refer in a more recent publication to the *Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics 1999*, which reported that 17,6% of women in the United States of America have experienced attempted or completed rape. To be more specific, 14,8% have experienced completed rape and 2,8% attempted rape. Rape is only one of

the facets of sexual abuse. The occurrence of the other facets is very difficult to pinpoint due to such incidents not being reported to authorities.

The frequent incidence of sexual abuse has also become a matter of serious concern in South Africa. The *Report on the State of the Nation's Children* (2001:138) gives a short overview on the statistics regarding the abuse and neglect of children in our country. According to the statistics as reported by the South African Police Services in 1999, the incidents of sexual abuse are on the increase "*In 1998, the South African Police Services Child Protection Unit and specialised individuals dealt with 37 352 reported crimes against children. This is an increase of nearly 58 per cent (%) since 1994. Rape is the most prevalent crime against children accounting for 42 per cent (%) of total crimes in 1998.*"

Taylor and Lutshaba (2002:13), who studied the problem of sexual abuse in South African schools, emphasized the severity of the sexual abuse: "*...it is estimated that one in three girls will be sexually abused before the age of 18...*" and "*... it is estimated that one in 20 school girls, aged 15 to 18 years had been raped during the year 2000*". The contribution by Amnesty International and the Human Rights Watch to the *Draft Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Amendment Bill* on 15 September 2003 affirms Taylor and Lutshaba's finding by stating that "*Existing data suggests that 40 per cent (%) of rape survivors are girls under eighteen...far too many girls have no safe haven from sexual abuse: many girls are coerced to have sex and are otherwise subjected to sexual harassment and violence by male relatives, boyfriends and schoolteachers or male classmates.*"

The Drakenstein municipal community is also confronted with the phenomenon of sexual abuse. From a pilot study done by the URDR in the Paarl community, it is evident that sexual violence and abuse of females are common practice. The following two articles, published in the community's local newspaper *Paarl Post*, on 2nd June 2005, are examples:

“Die polisie soek na die pa van die ongebore kind van ‘n 14-jarige verkragtingsslagooffer van Daljosafat. Die ouers van die meisie het ‘n klag by die polisie gelê nadat sy op 5 Desember verlede jaar verkrag is...”

“Honderde roubeklaers het Sondag by die wit doodskissie in Paarl-Oos stilgestaan, en met hartseer afskeid geneem van die meisietjie met die fyngevegde haartjies. Cameron Chordnum (2) het die vorige naweek wreed gesterf, nadat sy in Chigago verkrag en vermoor is, na bewering in haar pa se slaapkamer. Haar ma, Rozanne Chordnum (17), kon saam met haar ouers van Eersterivier die dogtertjie groet...”³

The above are only two of many cases of sexual abuse in the Paarl community. Many more are not even reported (Erasmus & Mans, 2005:141). From the second news article, it is evident that the effects of sexual abuse are not only limited to the victims, but it affects the victims' families and the community too. Ahrens and Campbell (2002:233) highlighted the spread of the effects of sexual abuse by remarking that victims are in need of support after surviving a sexual abuse incident. The victims often turn to their families and friends for support, thereby involving them in their trauma and brokenness. The researcher takes note of the effects abuse have on the families of the victims and the communities. However, the primary focus of this research is on the individual adolescent female victim of sexual abuse.

After analyzing available statistics, reading various articles and literature on the subject of sexual abuse in the Paarl community, it became clear to the researcher that far too many people here are traumatized and are living broken lives due to this appalling crime. The researcher, a Christian youth worker, was therefore motivated to take up the calling of being an instrument of healing in broken lives of sexually abused adolescent females. It is the researcher's belief that FBO's, especially the church as the body of Christ, should be the most important agent of healing in these girls' lives. Unfortunately, the pilot study conducted by the URDR seems to prove otherwise.

³ Although the second victim was just a baby, the mother was a 17-year old adolescent, indirectly affected by the abuse of her child.

1.3 Problem statement

As mentioned in the introduction, the URDR has researched the social development needs of communities in order to help FBO's to address these needs. The study conducted in the Paarl community resulted in an important article published by Erasmus and Mans (2005) called "*Churches as Service Providers for Victims of Sexual and/or Violent Crimes. A Case Study from the Paarl Community*".

In this article, the URDR described the several methods used to collect data: Firstly a Geographical Positioning System (GPS) was used to map all places of worship within the Paarl's geographical boundaries. Secondly, 10% of households were surveyed by means of questionnaires. These questionnaires determined the number of people involved in rendering services to the victims of sexual abuse, the number of people receiving assistance and some people's perceptions on congregations' involvement with available services. Thirdly, questionnaires were sent to the leadership of various congregations in the community. These questionnaires aimed to establish congregations' involvement with the victims of sexual abuse as well as the networks they partner with to provide services to the victims. Lastly, secondary data from the South African Police Services and Census 1996 were used to compile statistics on violent and/or sexual crimes.

Erasmus and Mans (2005:145) mapped 120 places of worship using GPS in the Paarl community. From the household survey questionnaires, the following perceptions of the people in the community were highlighted:

- 72,5% of respondents felt that congregations should be directly involved with victims of sexual abuse;
- 72% of respondents indicated that congregations should provide counseling to these victims;
- 66% of respondents felt that congregations should take preventative action against sexual abuse.

Considering the above statistics, the expectancy of the community is that congregations, as FBO's, should be actively involved with the victims of sexual abuse. However, reality proves otherwise. From the same household survey, it became evident that only 12,5% of respondents were directly involved with victims of sexual abuse, 10,3% of respondents were involved in counseling and 9,8% were involved with preventative actions.

The questionnaires to congregations' leaderships did not present a better picture. Only two congregations were involved in rendering services as FBO's to the victims of sexual abuse: one a Dutch Reformed congregation and the other a Catholic congregation (Erasmus & Mans, 2005:147). This is in shrill contrast with the expectancies of the community.

From the URDR's study it is clear that some members of congregations in the Paarl community are individually involved with the victims of sexual abuse, but the congregations as FBO's are not (Erasmus & Mans, 2005:147).

1.4 Research question

Based on the URDR study's findings, as well as the local newspaper articles reporting on incidences where adolescent females were victims of sexual abuse, this research will be guided by the following question: **Why are congregations in the Paarl community not involved as faith based organizations (FBO's) with the support of adolescent female victims of sexual abuse?**

1.5 Research goal and objectives

1.5.1 Goal of the study

De Vos (2002:106) defines a goal as an abstract concept that refers to the “...*end to which effort or ambition is directed.*” The goal of this study is to explain and understand

the reasons why congregations in the Paarl community are not involved as FBO's with the support of adolescent female victims of sexual abuse.

1.5.2 Objectives of the study

De Vos (2002:106) explains objectives as the more concrete, measurable and speedily attainable steps that can be taken to realize the goal. The research objectives are as follows:

- To report on adolescent female victims' experience of sexual abuse. This will be done by means of a literature study focusing on the nature and effects of sexual abuse on adolescent females;
- To identify reasons why congregations in the Paarl community are not involved as FBO's with the support of adolescent female victims of sexual abuse. These reasons will be identified through an empirical study, by means of basic individual interviews;
- To propose some guidelines, from a practical theological perspective, for congregations to become involved as FBO's with the support of adolescent female victims of sexual abuse.

1.6 Research approach

This research is conducted from the **qualitative research** approach. Marshall and Rossman (1999:2) define qualitative research as “...grounded in the lived experiences of people.” In addition, Babbie and Mouton (2006:270) highlight the fact that qualitative research studies human action from the perspective of the social actors themselves. It is aimed at describing and understanding, rather than explaining.

Marshall and Rossman (1999:2), as well as Babbie and Mouton (2006:270), are clear on the characteristics of the qualitative research approach. Both agree that qualitative research is conducted in the natural settings of the social actors. Multiple interactive data collection methods, which respect the humanity of participants, are also being used.

Another characteristic of the qualitative research approach is that the research process is “...*emergent rather than tightly prefigured*.” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999:3). Babbie and Mouton (2006:270) agree that the qualitative research process is inductive, resulting in the generation of new theories. Therefore, qualitative research does not test a hypothesis in a laboratory, but studies social action in its natural context, in order to generate new theory.

This is the main reason why the researcher chose the qualitative research approach in order to describe and understand why congregations are not involved, as FBO's, with the support of adolescent female victims of sexual abuse. The research is conducted in the natural context of congregations, by means of interactive data collection methods. The methods will be explained later on. This research will not test a certain prefigured hypothesis, but aims to generate new proposals/suggestions on how congregations, as FBO's, can become more involved with the support of adolescent female victims of sexual abuse.

1.7 Research design

A research design can be defined as the plan or blueprint of how research is conducted (Babbie & Mouton, 2006:74). It is the strategy the researcher follows in order to answer the research question.

The qualitative research approach holds several types of research designs (Babbie & Mouton, 2006:278; Henning, van Rensburg & Smit, 2004:38). For the purpose of this research, a **case study design** is chosen.

According to Henning et al. (2004:41) a case study is characterized by the boundedness of its unit of analysis, also known as a “*bounded system*”. This bounded system is a single entity, “...*a unit around which there are boundaries*” (Merriam, 2002:178). In this research, the clear boundaries of the bounded system are geographical of nature. The congregations in the geographical area of Paarl are the bounded system. This research

investigates congregations' interaction as FBO's with the prevalence of adolescent female sexual abuse in the Paarl community.

1.8 Research Methodology

1.8.1 Population

De Vos (2002:198) quotes Powers et al. when giving a definition of a population: “...*a population [is] a set of entities in which all the measurements of interest to the practitioner or researcher are represented.*” In the case of this research, the population is the 120 congregations in the Paarl community mapped by the URDR in 2001. All of the 120 congregations cannot be studied, therefore a sample is needed.

1.8.2 Sampling

A sample can be defined as a small portion of the total set of objects, events or persons that together comprise the subject of the study (Seaburg in De Vos, 2002:199). The sample for this research is procured by means of **non-probability sampling**, specifically **purposive sampling**. Babbie and Mouton (2006:202) define purposive sampling as a sampling method where the researcher uses his/her own judgment when selecting sample members. A researcher's judgment should be based on his/her knowledge of the population and the nature of the research (Babbie & Mouton, 2006:166). The sample for this research was selected from the list of 120 congregations mapped by the URDR in the Paarl community. For the sample to be representative of the population, certain criteria were used when sample members were selected. The sample members were selected for the sample to contain at least the following:

- Two congregations of any Christian tradition from the less affluent eastern Paarl;
- Two congregations of any Christian tradition, from the less affluent northern Paarl;

- Two congregations of any Christian tradition, from the more affluent southern Paarl;
- Two congregations of any Christian tradition, from the more affluent western Paarl.

1.8.3 Methods of data collection

For the purpose of this research, data was collected by means of a literature study and empirical research in the Paarl community.

1.8.3.1 Literature study

Henning et al. (2004:27) states that a literature study is aimed to place the research in a specific context. The literature study in this research focuses on adolescent females as victims of sexual abuse.

1.8.2.2. Empirical research

The primary information needed for this research was obtained by means of self-administered **basic individual interviewing**. Babbie and Mouton (2006:289) understand basic individual interviewing as different from most other types of interviews as it is an open interview, where the respondent speaks for him/herself. The respondent does not have to answer a number of pre-set questions formulated in particular words. It is in essence a conversation between the researcher and the respondent, where the researcher establishes a general direction and pursues the specific topics raised during the interview.

For this research, the purpose of basic individual interviewing is threefold. The first purpose is to establish whether or not the responding congregation is involved as a FBO, with the support of adolescent female victims of sexual abuse. Secondly, to determine in which ways the responding congregation is involved with the support of these victims, or alternatively why the responding congregation is not involved with these victims at all.

Lastly, the purpose is to elicit some proposals from the respondents on how congregations can become more involved as FBO's. All the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed in order for data analysis to be effective.

A full discussion on the basic individual interviews used for this research follows in chapter three.

1.8.4 Method of data analysis

Henning, van Rensburg and Smit (2002:102) explain data analysis as the process of converting the raw data to final patterns of meaning. The data collected by the basic individual interviews, was analysed by means of basic content analysis procedures (Henning et al., 2002:104-108). The first stage in the analysis is known as open coding, where the data is intensively examined and taken apart into different units of meaning. Following the demarcation of the units of meaning, the researcher conceptualised the different units of by assigning a code to each.

After the assigning the codes, the researcher examined the codes in search of correlations and relationships. Correlating codes were then grouped into categories. The researcher then examined the different categories for possible correlations and differences. Different themes, which all related to the research question, emerged from this examination. A further discussion on this process follows in the third chapter.

1.9 Key Concepts of the research

Sexual abuse: The exploitation or sexual activities that threatens and harms a person's health and welfare (Wallace, 1996:58). A detailed discussion of this concept follows in the second chapter.

Adolescence: Adolescence commences at the ages of 11 to 13 and ends between the ages of 17 and 22, and refers to people who usually form part of the secondary school system

(Gouws, Kruger & Burger, 2000:4). For the purpose of this study, adolescence is defined by the ages of 13 to 18.

Paarl community: The community of Paarl forms part of the Drakenstein municipal area in the Western Cape Province. Other towns in this municipal area include Hermon, Wellington and Franschoek.

Congregations as Faith Based Organizations: Sider and Unrah (2004:119-120) identifies five types of FBO's: faith-permeated; faith-centered; faith affiliated; faith-background and faith-secular partnership. For the purpose of this research, *faith-permeated organizations* were chosen. This type of FBO connects with religious faith at all levels of the organization's mission, staffing, governance and support. Its programs extensively integrate explicitly religious content. Faith-permeated organizations include the Christian church and its congregations.

Victim: In the context of this research, a victim is an adolescent woman of the Paarl community who has been physically, mentally and/or emotionally hurt as a result of sexual abuse.

Abuser: In this research the concept of abuser refers to the male individual who carried out the act of sexual abuse of an adolescent female.

Support: For the purpose of this research, the term 'support' includes physical, financial, psychological, spiritual, and emotional support to victims.

1.10 Ethical aspects concerning the research

A researcher has the right to collect data, but not at the expense of any individual (Babbie & Mouton, 2006:520). Therefore, certain ethical guidelines have been formulated to protect both the researcher and the respondents.

To ensure the researcher's ethical conduct towards the respondents, the following ethical issues, as identified by Babbie and Mouton (2006:521-526) are to be discussed: voluntary participation, detriment to respondents and anonymity/confidentiality.

1.10.1 Voluntary participation

Social research is often seen as an invasion of people's privacy. Firstly, the respondent has not requested to take part in the research. Secondly, it is going to require some of the respondent's time to partake in the research, and thirdly, the respondent may possibly have to reveal some personal information during the research (Babbie & Mouton, 2006:521). It is therefore paramount that the respondent voluntarily agrees to partake in the research (See Appendix A).

In this research, specific congregations were identified and invited to participate. The invitations were done by letters, which were e-mailed or hand-delivered. A copy of this letter can be found in the Appendix. This letter informed the respondents of the purpose of the research and the method of data collection. Participation was completely voluntary.

1.10.2 Detriment to the participants

Research should never be detrimental to the respondents. Participants can be harmed in several ways. The most common way is to reveal sensitive information that can either embarrass them or endanger their lives (Babbie & Mouton, 2006:522).

The researcher realizes that sexual abuse is a very sensitive matter to everyone affected. Therefore, this research was approached with the greatest sensitivity possible. During the basic individual interviews no participant was pressured to answer any question that made him/her feel uncomfortable. The data gathered from the interviews is regarded as highly private and confidential.

1.10.3 Anonymity and confidentiality

Anonymity and confidentiality are two ways to help the researcher ensure that no harm comes to the participants in the research (Babbie & Mouton, 2006:523). Unfortunately, these two concepts are often confused. Anonymity refers to when the researcher does not know which response belongs to which participant. This way the researcher cannot embarrass or harm any participant. Confidentiality refers to when the researcher knows which response belongs to which participant, but promises not to reveal their identities when making the results public.

This research's method of data collection does not secure anonymity because the researcher is also the interviewer. However, the researcher undertook every possible measure to ensure the confidentiality of the participants. The researcher undertook to handle all information as confidential and respected the respondents' right to privacy. The data gathered during this research was stored on a computer, which could only be accessed with a password. Before the data was saved onto the computer, all identifying details (respondents' names, addresses and contact details) were removed and replaced with codes. Back-up files were made onto a compact disk, which was stored in a locked cabinet. On completion of the research, all information has been destroyed.

1.11 Contribution to the discipline of practical theology

This research is conducted within the discipline of practical theology. To fully understand the contribution this research strives to make, a clear exposition of the researcher's understanding of practical theology is needed.

1.11.1 Nature of practical theology

There are numerous definitions to describe the nature of practical theology. Dingemans (in Dreyer, 1997:14) defines practical theology as follows: "*in de praktische theologie gaat om 'transformatie' en 'verbetering' van de huidige praktijk – en zomz zelfs om*

‘intervensie’- op grond van de analyse van de situasie, de achterliggende motieven en de theologiese visie van die geloofsgemeenskap. Het doel van alle praktiesch theologisch ondersoek – en dus ook die maatschappelijke en kerkelike relevantie – is gelegen in het van aanbevelingen voor een betere praktyk.” From this definition it is evident that practical theology constantly strives to improve or transform the context in which it operates. With Dingemans’ definition in mind, Heitink, Pieterse and Vos’s (2000:54) description of practical theology as a “crisiswetenskap” becomes relevant to this study. It is seen as a “crisiswetenskap” because of its close involvement with the praxis where crises constantly arise. Sexual abuse is a severe crisis in the Paarl community and the congregations, as FBO’s, in this community are not untouched by it.

In addition to Dingemans’ and Heitink et al.’s definitions of Practical theology, Albert Ploeger’s (1999:87-88) following definition enhances and affirms practical theology’s responsibility not to focus on itself, but to be actively involved in the crises that constantly arise in the praxis: *“Practical theology describes and investigates Christian praxis, with the help of hermeneutics of the Bible and the Christian tradition, within our social and cultural context, and therefore traces the being and acting of a community of believers, in order to transform the religious beliefs and practices to spiritual communication of faith, furthering integrity of human life and of the whole creation, in the light of the messianic vision of the coming Kingdom of God.”*

From the above definitions it is evident that practical theology is primarily concerned with communicating the gospel to all people, which results in transformation.

The communicational character of practical theology is emphasized by both Dreyer (1999:48) and Nel (1999:26), by referring to Habermas’s theory of communicative actions as a metatheory⁴ of Practical theology. This theory implicates that

⁴ Yolanda Dreyer (1999:46) notes in her article “*‘n Beginning our Meta- en Basisteoretiese Aannames in die Praktiese Teologie*”, that it is acceptable to speak of a metatheory, basic theory and a praxis theory when contemplating the theoretical assumptions concerning the nature of Practical theology. She also explains the relationship between these theories: “*Dit wil sê, ‘n metateorie lei tot ‘n basisteorie gerig op ‘n bepaalde praktykteorie.*” A metatheory, according to Dreyer (1999:47), relates to the theoretical framework wherein primary questions concerning the specific study, are answered. “*Dit stel die teoloog instaat om*

communication occurs through people's actions. The gospel is also communicated through actions, specifically faith actions. In this regard, Dreyer (1999:50) names the source of communicative faith actions⁵ as follows: *“die ‘geloofshandeling’ van mense word gegrond in God se handeling met die mens in die verlede, hede en toekoms as basis. Waar handeling ter sprake is, is kommunikasie ook betrokke.”*

It can be concluded that God communicates through faith actions, positioning a human communicator as a mediator and facilitator in the encounter between God and the people whom are communicated to. These communicative actions are identified by Nel (1999:35) as *kerugma* (preaching); *paraklesis* (pastoral care); *leitourgia* (worship); *koinonia* (fellowship); *diakonia* (diaconate); *kybernesis* (administration) and *marturia* (mission).

However, these communicative faith actions are not reserved for ministers, pastors and theologians only. It is the actions of all people confessing the Christian faith. In this regard, Pieterse (1999:418) clearly states: *“...the object of practical theology is the religious communicative actions by individuals, groups, in personal encounters, in organized religion (the church) and in society by all the agents mentioned above.”* These actions are intentionally aimed at intervening in a situation with the view of transforming it (Pieterse, 2001:9). It is important for the congregations in the Paarl community to perform these actions as FBO's in order to be a communication agent between God and adolescent female victims of sexual abuse.

Another metatheoretical aspect of practical theology, which complements the communicational metatheory, is that of a systems theory. Dreyer (1999:47-48) explains that a systems theory is concerned with a holistic approach to people and society, and also the dynamic interactions of the different systems in society. It is evident that when addressing the issue of sexual abuse of adolescent females, a communicational action theory engaging with a systems theory is paramount. This engagement will result in the

keuses uit te oefen rakende die vertrekpunte in die prakties-teologiese ondersoeke en die oriëntasie ten opsigte van die praktyk wat ondersoek word.”

construction of a basic theory that is aimed at transforming the Christian praxis - the facilitation of an encounter between God and adolescent female victims of sexual abuse.

Nel's (1999:28) thoughts on a basic theory for practical theology as being concerned with communicative faith actions in the service of the Gospel and the Kingdom of God that has come and is still coming in modern society. This is in agreement with Ploeger's (1999:87-88) already-mentioned definition of practical theology. With the addition of Dreyer's thoughts on a systems theory, it can be said that practical theology is basic theoretically concerned with the communicative faith actions in the service of the Gospel and the Kingdom of God that is coming in the *systems* of modern society.

Furthermore, Nel (1999:27) is of opinion that a basic theory of practical theology is directive of how the Christian praxis is approached. Here the relation between theory and praxis in the field of practical theology is aired.

1.11.2 Relationship between theory and praxis

The relationship between theory and praxis is very complex and is often considered to be the main problem in practical theology (Pieterse & Dreyer, 1995:32-33). It can be illustrated as bipolar, with continuous dialogical, critical interaction between both parties. Pieterse and Dreyer (1995:33) explain this interaction as follows: "*Practical theological theories should be saturated with the collective critical rationality of a Christian theological tradition to question the contemporary religious praxis critically. But praxis means to be a practice in which the practician constantly reflects critically on the underlying theories and ideologies which direct the praxis.*" It is clear that in the bipolar relation between theory and praxis, both are considered equal and are irreplaceable within the relationship.

The dialogical, bipolar relation between theory and praxis indicates that practical theology needs be approached hermeneutically (Pieterse, 2001:9). Heitink et al. (2000:59) explains the nature of a hermeneutic approach by stating: "...*hermeneutiek is*

een poging die kloof tussen tradisie en ervaring te overbruggen.” Pieterse’s (2001:5) understanding of a hermeneutic approach elaborates on Heitink et al.’s definition. He (Pieterse) sees hermeneutics as a science of understanding, of how people interpret their environment and situation, as well as documents, books and messages from the past, within their human reality in a particular era. It is thus a matter of comprehension and explanation.

For congregations as FBO’s in the Paarl community to be facilitators of communication between God and the adolescent female victims of sexual abuse, a hermeneutic approach is inevitable. The understanding of the victims’ histories, their experiences and interpretations thereof, are vital to the process of healing.

1.11.3 Transformational character

In the above literature, the transformational character of practical theology has been mentioned several times. Louw (1999:125) accentuates the transformational character of practical theology as a vital objective of practical theology, by saying: “*Praktiese Teologie ontwerp nou praxis-teorieë en handelingsstrategieë ten einde deel te wees van die sosiale en persoonlike transformasieproses. Die aksent wat gelê word in hierdie verskuiwingsproses is weg van sê (woord), in die rigting van doen (handeling)...Die konsekwensie van hierdie aksent op transformasie van die praktyk bring mee dat die praktiese teologie ‘n teologie van ‘performance’ en ‘public discourse’ moet wees.*”

The focus on the transformation and public discourse of practical theology is of great importance to the congregations as FBO’s in the Paarl community. It calls upon congregations not to reserve their communicational faith actions to their organizational or institutional structures, but to act beyond these boundaries and reach out to the broken lives of the community’s sexually abused adolescent females. Only then can the congregations become true facilitators of encounters between God and the victims, and healing can begin.

1.12 Conclusion

This chapter had the purpose of giving an orientation to the intended research. It focused on the prevalence of sexual abuse of adolescent females in the Paarl community, as well as the motivation for the research. Subsequently the problem statement, the research question, and the goals and objectives of the research were explained. The underlying methodology was highlighted and some ethical aspects were investigated. Finally, this chapter clarified concepts that are vital to the research and explained how this research aims to contribute to the discipline of practical theology.

The following diagram is an exposition of how the rest of this research report is structured:

Chapter	Focus
2	Adolescent Females and Sexual Abuse
3	Empirical data and research findings
4	Discussion of research findings recommendations to congregations
5	Conclusion to the research

CHAPTER TWO

ADOLESCENT FEMALES AND SEXUAL ABUSE

2.1 Introduction

Sexual abuse is a controversial matter in South Africa that crosses the boundaries of culture, religion, race and socio-economic class. It happens in rich as well as poor communities, to babies and adolescent females, even the elderly. No matter where, and to whom it happens, the effects thereof are devastating and harmful to the health and well being of the victims. The purpose of this chapter is to establish the context of adolescent female victims of sexual abuse by investigating several aspects of adolescence and sexuality. This chapter firstly reviews the important role of sexuality in adolescence. Secondly, definitions and the nature of sexual abuse are explored. Thirdly, this chapter focuses on the effects of sexual abuse on adolescent females. Fourthly, the legal justice procedure following a victim's report of sexual abuse is described. The chapter concludes by briefly discussing some official responses and statements from church leaderships regarding the prevalence and effects of sexual abuse in South Africa.

2.2 Sexuality and adolescents

Adolescence is marked by the most dramatic changes in the human body since pre-natal development. Sexual maturation is the most prominent concern of adolescence due to the onset of puberty⁶ (Kaplan, 2000:491). The following paragraphs explore these dramatic changes by focusing on the changes happening during puberty, different attitudes towards sexuality, adolescent pregnancy and HIV/AIDS and lastly, some reasons for adolescent sexual activity.

⁶ Puberty specifically refers to the process of sexual and physical maturation during adolescence.

2.2.1 Adolescents and puberty

The most profound changes during puberty are the development of primary and secondary sexual characteristics. Primary sexual characteristics are directly related to sexual reproduction. These include the enlargement of the ovaries, uterus, vagina, labia and clitoris and menarche⁷ (Louw, 1998:394; Gouws et al., 2000:9; Kaplan, 2000:463). Secondary sex characteristics distinguish the female and male sex. In females, these characteristics include the development of breasts, body hair, the accumulation of body fat, the broadening of hips and a change in skin texture (Louw, 1998:395; Kaplan, 2000:466).

Due to the sexual maturity reached during this phase, the adaptation to the biological changes to the body will certainly have some psychological and social effects on the adolescent female (Louw, 1998:403). These effects are comprehensively discussed in literature (Gouws et al., 2000:20; Kaplan, 2000:469; Erasmus and De Klerk, 2002:344). Early sexual development is one of the major issues that have a severe psychological effect on adolescent females.

According to Erasmus and De Klerk (2002:344), early development can be problematic for girls because they often feel that they have nothing in common with their undeveloped peers. Other negative effects are the lack of emotional stability and self-control. Their developed bodies may elicit sexual responses from older males that may lead to earlier sexual encounters, which these girls can seldom handle maturely (Gouws et al., 2000:20).

The adolescent will certainly want to explore and test the physiological changes in his/her body in order to accept and become comfortable with it. This exploration is influenced by different societies' attitudes towards acceptable sexual behaviour and activity.

⁷ Menarche is a term used for the first menstruation (Beckett, 2002:113).

2.2.2 Attitudes towards adolescent sexuality

The Western society's attitude towards sexual behaviour has been marked by inconsistency and double standards. Louw (1998:403) describes that the challenge of adolescents' awaking sexual needs were once absorbed by early-age marriages. But, as the average age for entering marriage increased, the sexual needs of adolescents became problematic. Creating a sense of guilt with any sexual activity, then, often prevented this problem. This approach did not succeed as could be expected, with some adolescents feeling guilty for exploring their sexuality and totally avoiding sexual behaviour. Other adolescents rebelled against this attitude by engaging in sexual activity without restraint.

Some of the non-Western societies, like the traditional African cultures, encourage sexual exploration during adolescence, with the goal of coaching these adolescents about sexuality and sexual behaviour (Louw, 1998:404). These explorations, however, do not include sexual intercourse.

The 1960's brought on a radical change in the Western society's attitude towards sexual behaviour. The discovery and manufacturing of contraceptives, as well as treatment for sexually transmitted diseases (STD's), brought on an attitude of "free sex", without the concern of pregnancy and STD's (Louw, 1998:405). This devalued the more conservative attitudes towards sexual behaviour.

There was, and still is, an inconsistent approach or attitude towards sexual activity, which is communicated to young people. This entails different messages regarding male and female sexuality (Kaplan, 2000:492; Beckett, 2002:126). The attitude towards male sexual behaviour, as Kaplan (2000:492) explains, is to explore their sexuality and to recognize and satisfy their sexual needs. In addition to this, Beckett (2002:126) adds that boys are encouraged to prove themselves as men by means of sexual activity. In contradiction to the liberal attitude towards male sexuality, openness towards female sexuality are sanction against, denying women's sexual needs, even in some marriages

(Kaplan, 2000:492). Girls are also encouraged to be more conservative and to be selective of a sexual partner, or to abstain from sex before marriage (Beckett, 2002:126).

The different and contradictory attitudes towards adolescent sexual behaviour confuse many adolescents and lead to the question: *Should or shouldn't I explore these changes in my body?* Beckett (2002:126) possibly answers this complex question by stating: *“For both boys and girls, though, coming to terms with new sexual feelings and new social pressures about sex is, of course, integral to adolescence and a driving force behind the changes that occur during this stage...these new feelings (and, I would add, the new social expectations that go with them) require a new self to be found.”*

Attitudes towards adolescent sexual behaviour are currently marked by more open discussion than previously. It is talked about in schools, churches and the media. Even though there is this openness concerning this subject, adolescents still struggle to make responsible decisions regarding responsible sexual behaviour (Louw, 1998:406). A possible reason for this may be that parents, teachers and other authority figures promote a conservative sexual lifestyle, but they do not provide the necessary guidelines to handle these sexual needs. Adolescents then turn to other sources to gain information on managing their needs. These sources, most frequently the peer group and the media, can be disastrous and even potentially dangerous.

Sourcing information is one of the several functions of the peer group during adolescence. Unfortunately, the information peer groups then offer on sexual matters are often false and misinterpreted (Louw, 1998:406). This may be due to the groups' inexperience regarding sexual activities. The common idea that 'everybody is doing it', is also grossly overestimated (Kaplan, 2000:494). The media mainly influences the information offered by peer groups.

The media is not always positive regarding sexual behaviour. As Gouws et al. (2000:162) and Motlatla and Centre (2001:30) rightly state, the mass media conveys the message to adolescents to live less conservatively, which is in contradiction to the messages given by

parents, churches and schools. One only has to watch the music videos on MTV or Channel O to see the explicit messages given about women and sex, or soap operas to see many examples of sexual promiscuity. These messages promote free sex, without emotional damage, the danger of falling pregnant, and/or the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS.

2.2.3 Adolescent pregnancy and HIV/AIDS

Pregnancy, being an obvious consequence of sexual intercourse, is quite common amongst South African adolescent females: 30% of South African babies are born to adolescent females (Gouws et al., 2000:169). In the last three years the Paarl community has become known for its high prevalence of adolescent pregnancies. According to research conducted by the Koinonia Youth Center (KYC) in Paarl, the national norm for adolescent pregnancies is 10%, whereas the Drakenstein community which includes Paarl, had an average of more than 20% in 2001 (KYC, 2005:3). Many of these unwanted pregnancies end in abortions. Drawing from statistics of the Department of Health, Koinonia Youth Center (2005:3) indicated that 436 legal abortions have been performed in Paarl during January to December 2005. A total of 91 of the terminated pregnancies were of girls younger than 18 years. Illegal abortions are unaccounted for.

Sexuality cannot be discussed without highlighting the danger of HIV/AIDS which has claimed so many victims throughout the world. It is estimated that globally 45 587 596 people were HIV-positive in February 2002 (Khan, 2002:4). Recent statistics from UNICEF's *State of the World's Children report 2006* indicates that 5, 3 million, of the 45,5 million people, are in South Africa. The report also indicates that 24% of pregnant adolescent females in South Africa are infected with the HIV-virus. The Drakenstein community is also affected, with an estimated 13, 2% of its population being HIV-positive (KYC, 2005:12).

Alarming large numbers of people are being infected when in the age group 15 to 24 years, which is considered a high-risk age group (Khan, 2002:5; UNICEF, 2006). Some

startling results concerning South African adolescent women's knowledge of HIV/AIDS and its prevention, were revealed by UNICEF (2006): of the women participating in the research, 83% knew that condoms can prevent HIV infection; 54% knew that a healthy-looking person can be HIV-positive; but only 20% used a condom during their last sexual encounter.

With the tragic reality of HIV/AIDS threatening South African adolescents, it is frightening that many people's first sexual encounter is in their adolescent years. *Youth 2000*, a report of research conducted in 2000 by the Community Agency for Social Enquiry (CASE), revealed that 45% of the participants in the study had a first sexual encounter between the ages of 16 and 18 (CASE, 2001: 4). Of this same age group, 56% were sexually active at the time of the research. When asked if these sexual encounters were voluntary, 25% responded that they had not wanted sex at that time. Of this group of respondents, 31% were adolescent females (CASE, 2001:6). The CASE-report also shows that only 52% of the participants in the study have asked their partners to use a condom during sexual intercourse (CASE, 2001:7). This means that 48% of the respondents exposed themselves or their partners to the danger of HIV/AIDS and possible unwanted pregnancy.

With these alarming statistics regarding unwanted pregnancies and HIV/AIDS, logic reasoning suggests that adolescents should not be sexually active before they marry. Unfortunately, reality proves otherwise.

2.2.4 Reasons for adolescent sexual activity

A recent study amongst the youth of the Anglican Cape Town Diocese (2005) sheds some valuable light on the reasons why adolescents become sexually active despite the reality of HIV/AIDS. Several reasons for sexual activity were indicated⁸. One of the most common reasons was that of peer pressure. As one adolescent female stated: "*As time*

⁸ These reasons include a need for money, influence by drugs and alcohol, perceptions about the sexual needs of the opposite sex, peer pressure, media influence, seeking love, boredom, pressure from parents or church leader, wanting an education. For a detailed discussion, see Mash and Kareithi (2005:43-49).

goes on, you cannot keep saying no.” (Mash & Kareithi, 2005:44). Fear of being labeled and excluded by the peer group also contributes to sexual activity. Adolescent females do not want to be known as non-virgins. They often question abstinence until marriage when they realise that their spouse will probably not be a virgin (Mash & Kareithi, 2005:47).

Another force driving the sexual relationships of adolescents is a hunger for love. Mash and Kareithi (2005:45) state that adolescents tend to confuse love and sex. Adolescents have a desire to be loved, especially by their parents. Unfortunately attention from their parents is limited, especially in a single-parent family. The result is that many adolescent females accept any attention from their peers, even if it is degrading and abusive (Mash & Kareithi, 2005:45). This need for love causes adolescent females to mistake sexual attention for love, making them vulnerable to sexual abuse.

2.3 Sexual abuse: definition and experience

Sexual abuse is defined in various ways throughout literature. By investigating some of these definitions, the author aims to formulate a definition that is applicable to the context of this study.

2.3.1 Definitions of sexual abuse

Psychologists Madu and Pelzer (2003:121) refer to sexual abuse as an adult, significantly older person, or someone in an authoritative position, who interacts with a child in a sexual way for the gratification of the older person. From a social work perspective, Wallace (1996:58) defines sexual abuse as sexual exploitation or sexual activities under circumstances that threatens or harms the health and welfare of the victim. Parkinson (1997:9), who studied child sexual abuse in Australia, defines sexual abuse as “...*involvement of dependant, developmentally immature children and adolescents in sexual activity with any person older or bigger, which they do not fully comprehend and to which they are unable to give an informed consent.*”

These definitions highlight three elements involved with sexual abuse: a victim, abusive behaviour and an abuser. Parkinson's (1997:9) definition is very clear on naming the victim, proposing that the victim is either younger and/or smaller than the abuser. According to the researcher, this is a sound definition of the victim because it acknowledges that it is not only children who are sexually abused, but adolescents as well.

All three of the described definitions agree that sexual abuse entails some sort of sexual activity. However, the definition provided by Wallace (1996:58) is most clear about the context in which this sexual activity takes place. He names it as circumstances that may threaten or hurt the health of the victim. The full extent of the nature of sexually abusive behaviour is discussed in the next section of this chapter.

Parkinson (1997:9), as well as Madu and Pelzer (2003:121), brings new dimensions to the common idea that an abuser is an adult. Both these definitions recognise that an abuser may be an adult, but also acknowledge that the abuser could be someone in an authoritative position, or someone who is physically bigger or stronger than the victim, regardless of age.

From the abovementioned, a definition of sexual abuse of adolescent females can be formulated as follows: **a person who is older, physically bigger or stronger and/or in an authoritative position, taking advantage of the victim's trust and respect, by coercing her into sexual activity which can be harmful to her health and well being.**

2.3.2 Nature of sexual abusive behaviour

Sexual abuse can take place either intrafamilial (incest) or extrafamilial. The abuser in intrafamilial abuse is a blood-relative of the victim. In the case of extrafamilial abuse, the abuser may be known or unknown to the victim (Wallace, 1996:58). Whether the abuser is known or unknown to the victim, the trauma of the abuse is equally devastating.

Sexual abusive behaviour takes on a number of different forms. The Dutch Reformed Church's (2005:2-4) document *Seksuele Misbruik: 'n Oorsig vir Leraars van Gemeentes in die Sinode van die Noord-Kaap* provides a thorough and categorised summary of the different types of sexually abusive behaviour. These categories are: contact sexual abuse, non-contact sexual abuse and sexual exploitation. Apart from these categories, the issue of rape as another category of sexual abuse is discussed.

2.3.2.1 Contact sexual abuse

Contact sexual abuse implies any physical contact of sexual nature between the abuser and the victim, with the aim of the abuser's sexual gratification. This includes oral-genital contact, intercourse and attempted intercourse, sexual kissing, hugging, fondling of breasts, thighs and buttocks, anal intercourse and masturbation (DRC, 2005:2-3; Madu & Peltzer, 2003:12; Wallace, 1996:58).

2.3.2.2 Non-contact sexual abuse

Non-contact sexual abuse occurs when the victim is exposed to pornographic material. It also refers to verbal sexual abuse, also known as sexual harassment (Fineran, Bennet & Sacco, 2001:211). Non-contact sexual abuse also includes voyeurism, exhibitionism and masturbation of the abuser while the victim is watching (DRC, 2005:4; Parkinson, 1997:10- 11; Wallace, 1996:58).

2.3.2.3 Sexual exploitation

The victim is not physically involved with the abuser, but is rather used for the abuser's financial gain (DRC, 2005:4). This includes prostitution, human trafficking and the using of the victim for the production of pornographic material.

All of the above qualifies as sexually abusive behaviour, yet it is important to understand that each abusive situation differs. Parkinson (1997:10) rightly states: "*For some the*

sexual abuse occurs just once, and the perpetrator is an acquaintance or a stranger. For others, the abuse continues regularly for years and the perpetrator is a parent or other trusted adult.” When considering Parkinson’s argument that for some victims the abuse is a once off incident with a stranger, it raises the question of rape. Does rape qualify as sexual abuse?

2.3.2.4 Rape and sexual abuse

There are several different opinions regarding the validity of rape as sexual abuse. The DRC’s (2005:2) document on sexual abuse suggests that rape differs from sexual abuse. The motivation for this suggestion is that rape is deliberate, violent and unlawful sexual intercourse with a person who does not, or cannot give consent to such intercourse. The document clearly states that rape happens in dangerous and dark places where the rapist is unknown to the victim.

This is a naïve statement, which may even cause further abuse and victimisation. Kaplan (2000:493) is of meaning that these types of statements and perceptions result in women keeping silent about rape. He confirms the researcher’s opinion that rape is more often than not committed by someone known to the victim: *“The great majority of rapes are committed by someone the victim knows even well. In fact, about half the rapes are by first dates, casual dates or romantic acquaintances.”* Kaplan refers here to the statistics on rape in the USA and it cannot be generalized and applied to the South African society. However, the statistics on rape in South Africa are just as frightening. Taylor and Lutshaba’s (2002:13) research on sexual abuse in South African schools, found that 21% of girls who were raped, indicated their rapists were relatives and 10 % indicated their boyfriends as their rapists.

What became clear from Taylor and Lutshaba’s (2002:13) research on sexual abuse in South African schools is that one third of rapes in South African schools were perpetrated by teachers. Rapists are therefore often well known by their victims, and adolescent

females are also not only raped in dark dangerous places, but in our schools, in our homes and even on our church grounds

What is the correlation between rape and sexual abuse? Wallace (1996:58) distinguishes rape from sexual abuse on the grounds of the different techniques used by a rapist and an abuser. A rapist induces the sexual act on the basis of force and fear. An abuser may also use force and fear, but also use other influences such as manipulation and coercion to accomplish his goal.

The author agrees with Wallace's distinction between rape and sexual abuse, but considers rape as one type of sexual abuse. Its effects on the victim are also considered just as severe as those of other sexual abusive behaviour.

2.3.3 Understanding the abuser

Sexual abusers cannot be stereotyped. They appear to be ordinary people: neighbours, youth leaders or family friends. Referring to "them" is also inaccurate, for "they" are so entwined in our society that "they" become "us" (Parkinson, 1997:30).

Yet, there are some warning signs, as indicated by the DRC's (2005:10) report on sexual abuse. These signs indicate that abusers may also abuse drugs and alcohol, are often adolescents, are in need of a sense of power and want to assert authority over others. And as the Christian Reformed Church in North America's report of Synodical Committee on Physical, Emotional, Sexual Abuse (SCONAB) indicates, many abusers have also been victims of abuse themselves (SCONAB, 2004:26). Every abuser has a reason and motivation for his behaviour. The popular belief is that having power and control over the victim is the motive for abuse (Hamby & Sugarman, 1999:961). However, James Makepeace (1997:42) considers the cause of the abuser's behaviour not to be aggravated by one factor in his life, but to be influenced by several factors. These factors are interrelated and complicated and can be labeled as biophysical and social factors.

2.3.3.1 Biophysical factors

Many sexual abusers are adolescents (DRC, 2005:10). When looking at the male development during adolescence, it is found that this phase is the time of peak physical condition (Louw, 1998:486). It is the peak of physical strength, stamina, elasticity and sensory observation. As have already been discussed in the previous chapter, adolescence is characterised by sexual awakening. During this phase, the male reaches sexual maturity. When this sexual maturity is not properly dealt with and assimilated, it may become a weapon of abuse.

2.3.3.2. Social factors

When attempting to understand what contributes to, or aggravates an abuser's sexually abusive behaviour, it is necessary to take into account the state of families and the gender relations in South African societies. It is the author's opinion that the state of families is closely linked to gender relations. Within the social context of South Africa, the structure of families and gender relations are both marked by patriarchalism.

In his article "*Theological Anthropology and Gender Relations*", Koopman (2004:193) describes the underlying essence of patriarchalism as independence and power. Koopman consults theologian Moltmann in defining patriarchalism: "...the term for an institutionalized system of sexual hierarchy and a psychological mechanism for its justification, according to which the man is born and made to rule, while the woman is born and made to serve." Koopman (2004:193). This patriarchal system is alive and well in South Africa.

However, the patriarchal system has seriously been challenged since the government adopted the *Beijing Platform for Action* for the advancement of women in South Africa in 1995 (Mogosetsi & Ryke, s.a, 17). This adoption initiated drastic measures in

empowering women. It has given them decision-making roles and ensured economic participation and power.

This sudden change, and challenge to the patriarchal system, has left many men bewildered. These men may experience this empowerment of women as a threat and then retaliate by using physical power (Mogosetsi & Ryke, s.a, 21), resulting in abuse. In this regard, rape is being considered as one of the most “*dehumanising consequences of patriarchy*.” (Du Toit, 2003:36). It is an assertion of power through an act of humiliation, establishing and affirming manhood and masculinity, at the cost of the pain and suffering of the female.

The family whether marked by patriarchalism or not, is the primary space where a child learns to interact with people and about the norms and values of his culture (Louw, 1998:314). When this space is filled with violence and abuse, it is a popular belief that the child will also grow up to be abusive. This belief is strengthened by the social learning theory of psychologist Bandura, which indicates that behaviour is learnt by means of observation and modeling (Makepeace, 1997:40). It is true that most abusers have been abused themselves (DRC, 2005:10; SCONAB, 2004:20) but the author does not agree that all victims of abuse become abusers. After experiencing the effects of abuse, some victims choose not ever to cause pain and suffering to others.

2.4 The adolescent female victim and the experience of sexual abuse

Victims experience the trauma and effects of sexual abuse differently due to the influence of several factors. For example, the closeness of the relationship between the victim and the abuser, and the duration of the abuse, determine the distress and trauma a victim experiences. Parkinson (1997:113) gives a clear illustration: “*A teenage girl’s experience of being groped by a stranger on a train or in a cinema may be very distressing, but is unlikely to affect her as seriously as long-term abuse by her stepfather.*” Even though

the intensity of the trauma is variable, the effects of sexual abuse on adolescent females are a reality and cannot be ignored.

2.4.1 Effects of sexual abuse

Sexual abuse have numerous effects on the victims, far too many to be described within the length of this study. The focus will therefore be on the negative effects on the well being of the development of the adolescent female. These include negative effects on sexuality, self-esteem; emotions, intimacy, trust and faith issues.

2.4.1.1 Sexuality

Possibly the most severe and profound consequence of sexual abuse is the effect on the sexuality of the adolescent female. As the adolescent developmental phase is primarily marked by sexual maturation, the damage done by sexual abuse during this phase could be irreversible (DRC, 2005:13). An overview of sexual development taking place during puberty has already been given at the beginning of this chapter.

Sexual abuse jeopardizes the adolescent woman's emerging sense of womanhood. She may experience her physical blossoming as a perverse object of provocation to others. In addition to this, SCONAB (2004:27) adds that the victim could associate her developing femininity with the loss of control and a vulnerability to society.

Sexual abuse can also cause a fear of sex (Spies, O'Neil & Collins, 1998:373). In reaction to this fear, sexual arousal awakes feelings of guilt, shame, disgust, pain and humiliation. These reactions may strain the victim's future relationship with her husband. It is also noteworthy that the effects of sexual abuse could also change the sexual orientation of the victim (Parkinson, 1997:130). She may enter into a lesbian relationship in order to escape the feelings of guilt, shame, disgust, pain and humiliation, brought on by her male abuser. The idea of entering into a sexual relationship with a male is just too painful and difficult.

This is typically an unhealthy and destructive skill developed by the victim, in order to cope with the painful emotions.

Many victims apply unhealthy and destructive skills in order to cope with, or escape, the trauma and distress of sexual abuse. One of these skills, which specifically relates to adolescent females, is that of eating disorders. In a world where being thin is perceived as being beautiful, many adolescent females develop eating disorders to meet this criteria. However, the adolescent victims of sexual abuse do not want to be beautiful. They would rather hide their bodies from any sexual attention. This is due to the fact that many victims blame their bodies for the abuse; they will harm their bodies in order to avoid further abuse (Spies et al., 1998:373). Victims will therefore try to make themselves unattractive to men by either starving their bodies, or cover it with excessive fat.

2.4.1.2 Identity formation and poor self-esteem

An adolescent has to adapt to a physically changing body that are strange and different to childhood. With all of these changes happening an adolescent's security of knowing who she is, is endangered (Louw, 1998:429).

Literature refers to the work of psychoanalyst Erik Eriksson when discussing the adolescent's formation of an identity (Louw, 1998:52-55, 429-432; Kaplan, 2000:513-518; Beckett, 2002:118-121). Eriksson's stage of *identity vs. role confusion* is prevalent in adolescence (Louw, 1998:55). During this stage, questions like 'who am I?', 'where do I belong?' and 'where am I going?' have to be asked by the adolescent in order to successfully orientate herself towards an established identity (Kaplan, 2000:513).

However, a victim of abuse does not have a positive outlook on her identity. She learns to see herself through the abuser distorted perceptions. She receives the message from the abuser that she is worthless, unimportant, and only good for the gratification of others. Her own needs do not matter. When these messages are internalised, they become her inner beliefs about herself (Parkinson, 1997:116). With such a negative perception, the

victim feels worthless and develops a low self-esteem. She often blames herself for the abuse and thinks she either deserves it, or must have done something to provoke it (SCONAB, 2004:26). When the victim bases her identity on these messages from the abuser, it could lead to the emotions of guilt and shame.

2.4.1.3 Guilt and shame

The emotion of guilt arises when the victim thinks she could have done something to stop the abuse. Her thoughts often begin with 'if only I have...' According to Parkinson (1997:119), the emotion of guilt is a coping skill for the victim to deal with the trauma of the abuse. It is easier for the victim to blame herself for the abuse than to accept that the abuse was an act of evil on the side of the abuser. It can be said that the emotion of guilt flows from the poor self-esteem of the victim, blaming herself for the abuse and protecting the abuser.

The emotion of shame, however, runs deeper than guilt. It is an emotion involving the whole being of the victim. Parkinson (1997:120) and SCONAB (2004:17) refer to this as 'toxic shame', which robs abused victims of their ability to develop psychologically, socially and spiritually. The victim becomes ashamed of her body, feeling dirty, impure and undignified. "*Shame can sap the will to live. It can cripple the heart, robbing the victim of her enjoyment of life.*" (Parkinson, 1997:120). This destructive shame forces the victim to believe that no one could love her, and could lead to the development of fear of intimacy and the inability to trust others.

2.4.1.4 Intimacy and the inability to trust

Intimacy becomes an association with the negative emotions experienced during abuse (Spies et al., 1998:373). The effect thereof could be that the victim cannot handle closeness to another person, as this constantly reminds her of the abuse. She may be unable to give or receive nurturing. In conjunction with the fear of intimacy, is the

inability to trust others. Especially when the abuser is an authoritative person in the victim's life, the inability to trust becomes a serious matter.

The inability to trust people could seriously strain the social development of the victim, especially regarding the building of relationships with her peer group and establishing her own identity. The peer group plays a significant role in adolescence and has an important function in a young female's search and establishment of her identity (Beckett, 2002:124). The peer group also provides temporary identity while the adolescent explores other alternatives and it serves as a reference group. The peer group also provides advice and comfort (an understanding partner) in the search for identity (Kaplan, 2000:521). The peer group, constituting its own world with customs, traditions, language and dress code, brings temporary emotional stability to an unstable world of adolescence.

When a victim of abuse cannot build relationships with her peers, she does not have the support system needed to heal sufficiently and cannot effectively establish her own identity. She cannot build meaningful relationships with peers if she mistrusts other people. She will continue to believe that she is worthless and only good enough to satisfy others' sexual needs. This causes the victim to raise questions about the worth of her own life as well as the existence and love of God.

2.4.1.5 Faith issues

Change is the only constant in an adolescent's life, with new pressures emerging all the time. In the midst of this maelstrom an adolescent has to re-orientate her attitude towards her faith. Being sexually abused does not make this task easier, in fact, it complicates the matter even further.

The physical and emotional suffering caused by the trauma of sexual abuse, compels the victim to raise questions about God (Tam, 2001:166). These questions confront the victim's God-image. She struggles to re-orientate herself regarding her faith in God. Tam (2001:162) sees the issue not as one concerning the existence of God, but rather the

victim's image of God, which may not portray the real God. McFague (1982:138) argues that God-images are "*paradigm dependent*". The image one has of God is rooted in one's religious paradigm and a personal relationship with God. Louw (1999:400) affirms this by stating that one's God-image relates to one's behaviour. The way the victim relates to God determines how she reacts to the spiritual suffering brought on by the abuse.

Parkinson (1997:143) agrees that the victim struggles with the omnipotence of God, the God that was not present and did not prevent her abuse. Questions like 'why was God absent while I was being hurt?' and 'why did God not answer my prayers, were they not good enough?' often arise. These questions possibly indicate an image of a transcendental God who is in Heaven and who is not involved with His children on earth. This image often manifests in emotions of anger and resentment towards God. The people close to the victim find this anger towards God the most uncomfortable emotion to handle, more so than the victim herself (Parkinson, 1997:147). However, if anger is discouraged, outbursts of frustration and rage could follow. The victim's God-images can therefore contribute to her spiritual suffering.

Some female victims may experience difficulty to relate to God who is perceived as male. God is revealed in the Bible as a father and Jesus Christ as his son. Jesus also became a male human being on earth. The victim may have problems experiencing the love of a 'male' God, for she was subjected to the abusive and perverse 'love' of her male abuser. Even though God is far greater and beyond gender, the maleness of God⁹ may cause the female adolescent victim to distrust and shy away from God and her initial faith.

It is clear that the victims of sexual abuse are spiritually hurt and suffer greatly: "...*when one encounters suffering of whatever intensity, one's whole being is overwhelmed with pain, anguish and horror.*" (Tam, 2001:160). This suffering may cause victims to remain silent about the abuse in order to protect themselves. In South Africa the silence about

⁹ See McFague's book "Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language" (1982) for an in-depth discussion on the image of God as Father (male).

sexual abuse is however, a far more complex matter and is much more than just means of protection for the victims.

2.4.2 The silence

The stoical silence amongst the victims causes many incidences of sexual abuse not being reported to the authorities (Madu & Peltzer, 2003:119). Why do so many young women keep silent about being raped and abused? One reason for this silence that reoccurs throughout literature, is that of gender relations. Research on HIV/AIDS has unveiled the low status of women in South Africa, which contributes to the inability of victims to report the incidences of abuse to authorities (Maart, 2000:151). The authority and power of the patriarchal system in South Africa seems to be the breeding ground for abuse (Maart, 2000:151; Madu & Peltzer, 2003:121).

The patriarchal system silences the victims of sexual abuse by denying them a voice to speak out with. The attitude of 'man is made to rule and woman is made to serve', subordinates women into a position that disables them to oppose any inappropriate male sexual behaviour. These women may see sexual abuse as just another happening in life, not realizing that it is a violation of their human rights.

The protection of an abuser may be another possible reason for adolescent female victims to remain silent about the abuse. This protection may be the result of the victim's poor self-esteem. She may think that she is to blame for the abuse, the abuser is punishing her to make her a better person, or that she loves the abuser so much that she would do anything to protect him – even suffer in silence. However, when a victim decides to report the abuse to authorities, a legal justice procedure follows, which can be a prolonged, emotional draining experience. The unfortunate reality of this procedure is that the result may not always be in favour of the victim.¹⁰

¹⁰ The Western Cape Department of Social Services and Poverty Alleviation stated in the Draft Integrated Social Capital Formation Strategy (2005:10) that during the year of 2003, 384 cases of reported sexual abuse went to court, of which only 95 (24%) alleged abusers were found guilty.

2.4.3 Sexual abuse and legal justice procedures

The legal justice procedure can be categorised as pre-trial and post-trial procedures. Each of these categories has its own specific protocol to be followed. The South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) gives an overview of these procedures and protocols in their report on sexual offences against children.

2.4.3.1 Pre-trial procedure

The pre-trial procedure starts when a victim discloses the incident of sexual abuse to another person, known as the ‘third party’. The SAHRC (2002:14) indicates that disclosure could be made to a “...parent, guardian, teacher, friend, medical doctor, psychologist, relative, neighbour, the police, social worker, priest, community care worker or any other person who has some kind of relationship with the child”. The disclosure can be either accidental or with intent. It is interesting to note that even though accidental disclosure is the most common type (SAHRC, 2002:15), adolescents are more likely to disclose intentionally (Parkinson, 1997:205; SAHRC, 2002:15).¹¹ There is some legislature in South Africa concerning mandatory reporting that should be noted when discussing the disclosure of sexual abuse and adolescent females.

- *Mandatory reporting*

Both the Prevention of Family Violence Act 133 of 1993 and the Child Care Act 96 of 1983 as amended in 1996, oblige certain people to report abuse. The Prevention of Family Violence Act 133 of 1993 requires reporting from a wide variety of people: any person, who examines, attends to, advises or cares for any child. The Child Care Act of 1983 as amended in 1996 is more specific about who is obliged to report. Section 42 of the act makes it mandatory for every dentist, medical practitioner or nurse who examines or attends to any child, to report the abuse.

¹¹ This can be attributed to several factors like educational awareness through school programs, influences of peers or a relationship with a third party where the atmosphere is conducive to disclosure.

In reaction to the South African Law Commission's (SALC) report on the Child Care act, there was a recommendation that "*all religious leaders should be added to the list of specified mandatory reporters of suspected or alleged child abuse.*" (SALC, 2002:132-133). The author agrees to this recommendation because of Parkinson's (1997:202) statement that religious leaders are often the first to hear about incidences of abuse due to the relationship of trust they foster with the community.

When a victim has disclosed the abuse to a third party, the next step would be to report the incidents to the police.

- *The role of the police*

It is the role of the police to investigate an incident of abuse reported to them. The police's response is critical to the emotional well being of the adolescent female victim. A positive response from the police, affirming that the abuse has happened, could build self-confidence in the victim, something that has been severely compromised by the abuse. A negative response from the police, denying that the abuse has happened, could lead to secondary abuse. When the police's response is without empathy, patience and sensitivity, an already vulnerable victim will experience the trauma of regarded as being deceitful. This, in the mind of the victim, affirms the messages of the abuser – she is worthless and does not deserve being heard.

Once the abuse has been reported to the police, a docket will be opened and a case number allocated (SAHRC, 2002:19). After a case number is allocated, an investigating officer is appointed to the case. This officer should take a full detailed statement from the victim. The investigating officer is then responsible for taking statements from other witnesses (if available) to support the victim's claims and to ensure that the victim is medically examined and attended to. The officer is also responsible for arresting the abuser and opposing his bail application. The officer should, after statements have been taken and evidence collected, present the docket to a prosecutor, who will decide if the case is strong enough to prosecute.

- *Medical examination*

The purpose of the examination is to gather forensic evidence within 72 hours of the abuse in order to strengthen the victim's statement (SAHRC, 2002:21). The victim is advised not to bathe or to change her clothes, as this can destroy important evidence.

Another purpose of this examination is to offer the victim the option of post exposure treatment (SALC, 2002:220) known as Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP), which is a preventative antiviral treatment for sexually transmitted diseases. However, the type of PEP reducing the risk of HIV-contraction is not issued, for it is not government policy to issue this to children who have been sexually abused (SAHRC, 2002:22). Adolescent females also receive the 'morning after' pill to terminate pregnancy as well as treatment for any physical injury suffered during the abuse. The forensic evidence gathered from the medical examination is included in the docket, which is then presented to the prosecutor.

- *The prosecutor*

After carefully assessing the available facts, the prosecutor decides whether to prosecute the case or not. If the decision is made to prosecute, the matter is enrolled for trial in court and a date is set for the abuser's first court appearance.

It is then the responsibility of the prosecutor to prepare the victim for the trial, as the victim will be a state witness and the prosecutor will present the victim's case in court (SAHRC, 2002:24). While preparing the victim for the trial, the prosecutor will read the victim's original statement back to her in order to refresh her memory. The prosecutor must also explain court procedures to the victim and give examples of questions that could possibly be asked by the defense counsel. This is all done to make the victim feel more comfortable and less threatened in court.

2.4.3.2 Trial procedure

During the trial the case of the victim, the defense of the abuser as well as the evidence gathered during the investigation will be heard. The victim often views the outcome of the trial, whether the abuser is convicted or acquitted, as an acknowledgement of her experience of abuse. Therefore, thorough investigation by the police and proper preparation from the prosecutor are needed.

A day in court usually starts with the victim and her support group arriving early at court to meet with the prosecutor. After the meeting, the victim is taken to a separate waiting room, adjacent to the courtroom. She remains in the waiting room until called to testify. This is done so that the victim does not have to face her abuser unnecessarily. Since the victim is still considered as a child by the government, she has the right to 'in-camera' proceedings. Such proceedings exclude the public from the courtroom and prohibit the publication of the victim's identity by the media. This protective measure is taken to minimize the trauma caused by the trial.

After all the evidence has been heard, the court will reach a verdict. If the abuser is found guilty, the court will sentence him in accordance with the severity of the abuse. The abuser may apply for parole at some stage, of which the victim should be notified.

2.4.3.3 Post-trial procedure

It is obvious that a trial of this nature is an exhausting and emotional draining event. By testifying in court, the victim may relive the emotional trauma caused by the abuse. Describing the details all over could be an exposing experience that causes the victim to feel powerless once again. It is therefore imperative that the victim is debriefed once the trial has ended. This debriefing could take the form of counseling, whether individual or in a group. The counseling could help the victim deal with the emotional scars of the abuse and set her on a pathway of healing.

This chapter has so far focused on the adolescent female's experience of sexual abuse. It is evident that such an experience is a traumatising one, with several long-lasting effects. The effects are not only limited to the victim and her family, society is also affected. Therefore several church denominations have reacted to the prevalence of abuse by means of public statements.

2.5 Churches' response to sexual abuse

Churches worldwide have reacted to the increasing sexual violence against women and children. Internationally, The World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) has issued a formal statement in this regard on 24 November 2006, the eve of the 'International Day Against Violence Against Women'. This statement urged all churches to speak out against abuse and to honestly confront the root cause of the abuse (WARC, 2006).

On the local front, the South African Council of Churches (SACC) and the inter-religious National Religious Leaders Forum (NRLF) have both recognized that sexual abuse does not discriminate against faith. Therefore, they released a combined official statement to mark the commencement of the 'Sixteen Days of Activism Against Women and Child Abuse' in November 2005 (SACC, 2005). In this statement, titled *Interfaith Statement on Violence Against Women and Children*, the SACC and NRLF pledged their support for the war on abuse against women and children. Not only do they urge other religious leaders to participate in this war against abuse, but also advocate that women and children should enjoy equal rights, respect and opportunities in society (SACC: 2005).

The leadership of both the South African Catholic and Anglican denomination has also spoken out against sexual abuse. The South African Catholic Bishop's Conference (SACBC) has accepted the invitation from the media to make a statement regarding the reports of sexual abuse committed by clergy. This statement, published in the *Sunday Times* newspaper on 29 June 2003, clearly stated that the SACBC condemns sexual abuse as a moral evil and should be treated as a "*reprehensible crime*" (SACBC, 2003). This

statement also clearly indicates the procedure to be followed when a clergy is suspected of committing abuse.

The Anglican Church of South Africa has felt the need to “*sound a loud bell of warning*” about the prevalence of sexual abuse in South Africa (CPSA: 2006). The Bishops of the Church of the Province of South Africa (CPSA) met during September 2006 in Kempton Park, Gauteng, where a statement against the abuse of power in relationships has been formulated. In this statement, the CPSA argues that an abusive personal life appears to accompany abusive conduct in corporate life, thus acknowledging that abuse has a huge effect on society as a whole.

The Dutch Reformed Church’s leadership has released an official statement during their general synod meeting in June 2007. In this statement the leadership sympathizes with the South African women and children who have been victims of violence or abuse, and acknowledges that congregations can offer a process of healing to victims. The leadership also motivates congregations to be ready to handle cases not only occurring in their own congregations but also in the community (www.ngkerk.org.za/notule5Junie2007.doc).

These official responses, statements and documents indicate that churches in South Africa are well aware of the prevalence and reality of sexual abuse in South Africa. Church leaderships have given the ‘green light’ for congregations to become actively involved with the war on sexual abuse.

2.6 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to establish the context of female adolescent victims of sexual abuse. The discussion on the role of sexuality in adolescence highlighted that many factors contribute to adolescent sexual activity. Unfortunately, this activity not only increases the risk of adolescents contracting HIV/AIDS, but also makes them more vulnerable to sexual abuse.

Definitions and the nature of sexual abuse were then investigated. Here some thoughts were explored on what is regarded as sexually abusive behaviour. From the discussion, it was determined that rape should also be seen as sexual abuse.

The effects of sexual abuse on adolescent females were then described. This description highlighted the suffering and hardship the victim has to endure. It also established that the legal justice procedure can be a long, emotional one, and the outcome of the court case is not always in favour of the victim.

A brief overview of some churches' response to sexual abuse, followed. From the very fact that these responses and official statements exist, it is clear that abuse affects more than just the victim. It has affects on the whole of society. All the responses and statements viewed, called upon congregations to become part of the war on abuse, to cross the boundaries of culture, religion, race and socio-economic class to prevent this from happening in the first place.

Viewing the described context of adolescent female victims of sexual abuse in the light of the churches' call to become actively involved in the war on sexual abuse, the main question of this research arises again: Why are congregations not involved as FBO's with the support of adolescent female victims of sexual abuse? What are the reasons for the lack of involvement? These questions are explored in the empirical research, as described in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

EMPIRICAL INFORMATION AND RESEARCH FINDINGS

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter highlighted several churches' leadership's calls for congregations to become involved in the war on sexual abuse. Yet, according to the study conducted by the URDR in 2001, most congregations in the Paarl community are not involved as FBO's (Erasmus & Mans, 2005:147). This chapter's function is twofold: the first function is to report on the methods used by this research to determine why congregations in the Paarl community are not involved as FBO's with the support of adolescent female victims of sexual abuse. This is done by revisiting the purpose of the research, since the purpose of the research directs the methods used to conduct the research (Blaikie, 2000:58). The method of data collection, as well as the data analysis process is explained. Secondly, this chapter reports on the empirical data collected.

3.2 Purpose of the research

The purpose of this research is to enquire why congregations are not involved as FBO's with the support of adolescent female victims of sexual abuse. Blaikie (2000:61) labels this type of research as explanative research. Explanative research aims at understanding the existence of characteristics or regularities in a particular phenomenon. Therefore this research poses to **explain** and **understand** why congregations, are not involved as FBO's with the support of adolescent female victims of sexual abuse¹².

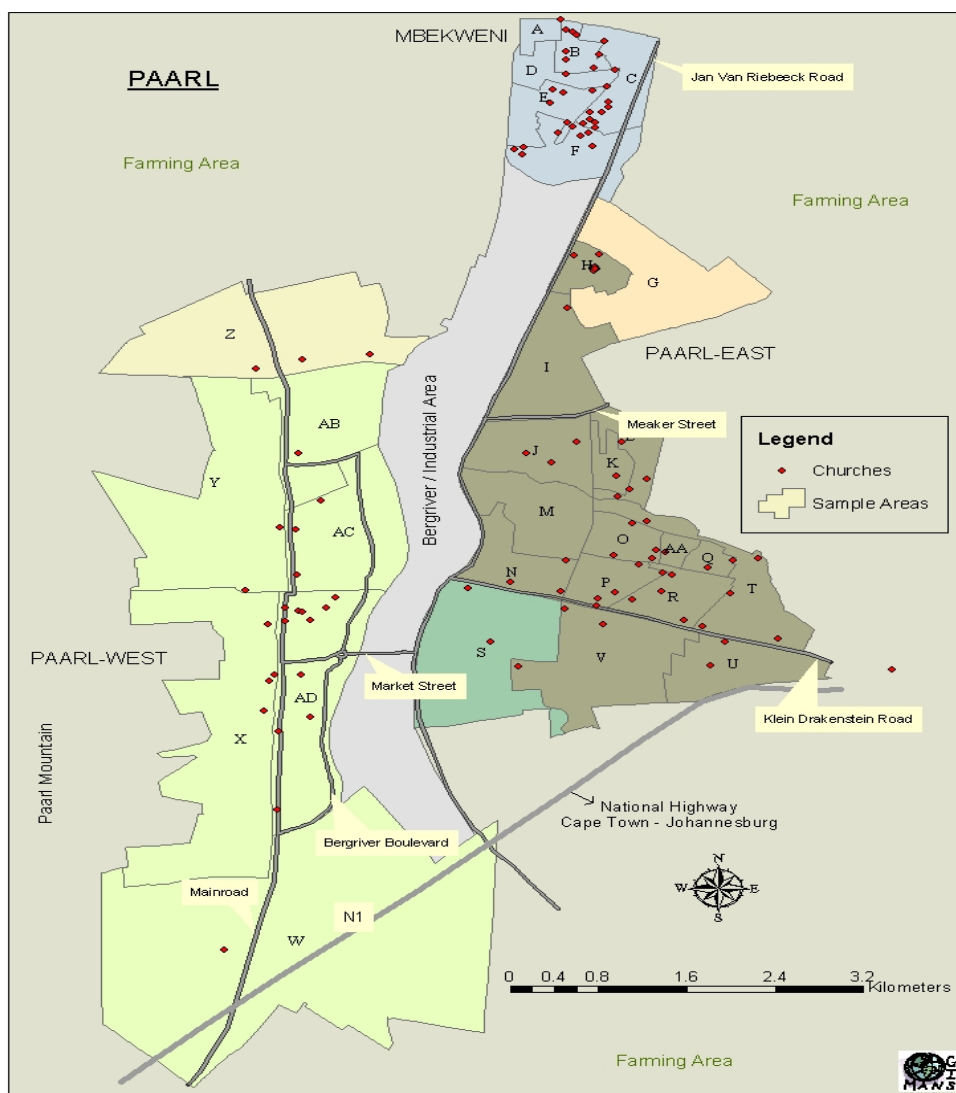
3.3 Population, sampling method and selection criteria

3.3.1 Population

¹² See page five to seven of the first chapter for a detailed discussion on the purpose of this research.

Blaikie (2000:198) refers to a population as “an aggregate of all cases that conform to some designated set of criteria.” The population, from which the sample for this research was drawn, consists of the 120 congregations identified by the URDR in 2001¹³. The following map indicates both the geographical urban landscape of the Paarl community, as well as the identified churches in the community:

Figure 1.1. Geographical mapping of all places of worship in the Paarl community (Erasmus & Mans, 2005)



¹³ See page five of the first chapter.

Erasmus and Mans (2005:346-347) dissect the Paarl community as follows:

- Areas A to F, known as Mbekweni, are a densely populated township of low socio-economic status;
- Area G is a fast growing informal settlement area, also of low socio-economic status;
- Areas H to R and T to V are mainly populated coloured people;
- Area S is populated by both white and coloured people, and is seen as a ‘middle class’ suburb;
- Area W to Z, AB, AC and AD are mainly populated by white people of high socio-economic status.

According to Erasmus and Mans (2005:346) the legacy of apartheid is clearly evident in the geographical urban landscape of the Paarl community. The suburbs are still very much divided according to race, as well as socio-economic status. From the above analysis it is evident that the Paarl community is divided into affluent southern and western suburbs, and less affluent northern and eastern suburbs.

3.3.2 Sampling method and selection criteria

A sample is a “*selection of elements (members or units) from the population; it is used to make a statement about the whole population.*” (Blaikie, 2000:198). Since this research does not have the resources to study the whole population, a sample was procured from the 120 churches identified in the Paarl community. The sample was procured by means of **non-probability sampling**, specifically **purposive sampling**. With this sampling method, the researcher used her judgment in selecting sample members. This judgment was based on the researcher’s knowledge of the population and the nature of the research (Babbie & Mouton, 2006:166).

De Vos (2002:334) suggests the researcher formulates selection criteria, based on the parameters of the population to assist the researcher with the purposive sample selection.

Given the URDR's analysis of the geographical urban landscape of the Paarl community, the researcher formulated the following criteria:

The sample should at least include at following:

- Two congregations of any Christian tradition from the less affluent eastern Paarl;
- Two congregations of any Christian tradition, from the less affluent northern Paarl;
- Two congregations of any Christian tradition, from the more affluent southern Paarl;
- Two congregations of any Christian tradition, from the more affluent western Paarl.

With the above criteria in mind, the researcher searched the Valcare website (www.valcare.org.za)¹⁴ for the following congregations' contact details:

U.R.C Simondium: This congregation represents a church from the reformed tradition. The congregation is located in Simondium, a farming community between Paarl and Franschoek. This congregation ministers mainly to Afrikaans-speaking farm workers. The congregation is located in area U on Erasmus and Mans (2005)'s map of the Paarl community.

A.F.M Protea: Situated in the centre of Paarl (area AD), this congregation ministers to Afrikaans and English-speaking, as well as white and coloured people, living in central and southern Paarl.

Paarl Covenant Church: This congregation is located in Paarl East, in area K. It ministers to Afrikaans and English-speaking coloured people. The congregation does not have a permanent church building and gathers at congregants' houses.

¹⁴ Valcare is an organization in Paarl that focuses on creating and establishing networks between faith communities.

Immanuel Pinkster Gemeente: This congregation is also situated in Paarl East, in area H. The congregation ministers to Afrikaans and English-speaking coloured people.

D.R.C Toringkerk: This congregation, situated in the town's centre (area AC), ministers to the western suburbs of the Paarl community, which is populated by mainly white, Afrikaans-speaking people.

D.R.C Paarl-Vallei: This congregation is found in the northwestern part of the Paarl community (area Y), and ministers to white, Afrikaans-speaking people living in the western suburbs.

U.R.C Agter-Paarl: This congregation is located in the less affluent northern suburbs of the Paarl community (area Z) and ministers to the coloured, Afrikaans-speaking farm worker community of northern Paarl.

D.R.C Agter-Paarl: This congregation is also located in area Z, in northern Paarl. It ministers to the white Afrikaans-speaking farmers of this area.

3.4 Data collection through basic individual interviewing

Interviewing is the leading method of data collection in qualitative research (De Vos, 2002:291; Babbie & Mouton, 2006: 289). Like any method of data collection, individual interviewing is not a perfect method, and has its own strengths and weaknesses. Being aware of these strengths and weaknesses, prepared the researcher for the task that lay ahead.

3.4.1 Strengths and weaknesses of individual interviewing

Individual interviewing's main strength lies in its capacity to obtain large amounts of in-depth data in a short time (De Vos, 2002:305). Due to its personal, one-on-one nature, the

information collected is far more than just numbers and figures (quantity), but are personal narratives told by human beings (quality). Therefore, individual interviews are the primary method of data collection in qualitative research.

The weakness, however, is that the success of the interviews rely on the cooperation of the respondents (De Vos, 2002:305). It can be very frustrating to the researcher if the respondents fail to attend the appointments made for the interviews. Uncooperative respondents can also delay the time-schedule in which the researcher aimed to complete the research, by providing untruthful information during the interview (De Vos, 2002:305). This untruthful information may lead to the research results being irrelevant or false.

The abovementioned strengths and weaknesses helped the researcher in many ways. The capacity of individual interviews to collect large amounts of information in a short time assisted the researcher to plan the research schedule more effectively. The humanness of the information collected helped the researcher to keep the research results contextually relevant.

The weaknesses of individual interviews prepared the researcher for the disappointments and frustration accompanying this data collection method. These weaknesses also motivated the researcher to think creatively and prepare alternatives to overcome the frustrations and disappointments, in order to reach the goal of this research.

Despite the weaknesses of individual interviews, the researcher still preferred to use this method of data collection. De Vos (2002:297) describes three different types of basic individual interviews, namely informal conversational interviews, guided interviews and standardised open-ended interviews. For the purpose of this research, **semi-structured guided interviews** were used to collect the relevant information.

3.4.2 Semi-structured guided interviews

Guided interviews are used to gather information regarding a specific phenomenon or subject. The researcher prepares a basic checklist beforehand pertaining topics related to the phenomenon or subject, which are important to be discussed during the interview (De Vos, 2002:297). Due to the checklist, this type of interview is “*ideal for obtaining comprehensive and comparable data*”, because every respondent is interviewed on the same topics (De Vos, 2002:298). Guided interviews are thus semi-structured by nature.

The nature of semi-structured interviews provides a flexible atmosphere where the researcher can follow avenues of interest that emerge from the conversation. When conducting semi-structured interviews, the researcher has a pre-determined set of questions that will be used to introduce and focus the interview (De Vos, 2002:302). These questions have the same function as the topics on a checklist prepared for a guided interview to guide the interview, not to control it.

The checklist for the semi-structured interviews conducted in this research, included the following topics:

- The congregation’s awareness of the prevalence of adolescent female sexual abuse in the Paarl community;
- The congregation’s involvement, or lack thereof, with the support of victims of this abuse;
- Suggestions regarding the involvement of the congregation.

The above-mentioned topics were formulated into the following questions:

- In what ways is your congregation aware of the prevalence of adolescent female sexual abuse in the Paarl community? Provide an example.
- Is your congregation involved in any way with the support of adolescent female victims of sexual abuse of female adolescents?
- If answered ‘yes’ – what does your congregation do?
- If answered ‘no’ – why is your congregation not involved?

- How do you think can/should your congregation be involved?

3.4.3 Role of the researcher

The researcher needed to be clear about her role during the interviews, in order to ensure that the information collected is done objectively. Babbie and Mouton (2006:290) warn against the researcher becoming too comfortable during the interview. Because basic individual interviewing is much like a normal conversation, the researcher is in danger of wanting to come across as an “interesting, worthwhile person.” This may result in the researcher spending too much time thinking about interesting things to say instead of listening to the respondent.

It is the role of the researcher to “*make the other person seem interesting, by being interested.*” (Babbie & Mouton, 2006:290). This is achieved by viewing the respondent as the person with the expertise on the subject, and allowing the respondent maximum talking time (De Vos, 2002: 302).

3.4.4 Procedures regarding the interviews

3.4.4.1 Contact-making procedures

Once the sample respondents were selected, the researcher contacted the leaders of the different congregations by telephone. The researcher informed them of being selected to take part and of the purpose and method of the research. During these conversations, the respondents were asked if they would be willing to participate. When a leader was not willing to participate, the researcher requested from him/her another person in the congregation to whom she could talk. The researcher conducted interviews with six ministers, one lay minister and one congregant.

The telephone conversations were followed-up by email or fax, stating the purpose and the method of the research (See Appendix A). The respondents also received a consent

form which they had to sign and return to the researcher before the interview could take place (See Appendix B).

3.4.4.2. Pilot study

Concurrently with the contact-making procedures with the respondents, the researcher conducted a pilot venture. The pilot venture was conducted with two congregations in the Paarl community that did not form part of the sample congregations. These interviews followed the same procedures as the sample interviews. These procedures are discussed in the next section.

The first purpose of the pilot venture was to experience some of the practical aspects regarding individual interviewing, before the actual sample interviews were conducted (De Vos, 2002:300). Both the respondents of the pilot study did not attend the original appointments the researcher made with them. The one respondent forgot about the appointment, and the other attended a funeral that continued longer than expected. The researcher then scheduled alternative appointments with both respondents. This experience taught the researcher that the data collection phase might continue longer than she initially planned for. This required the researcher to be patient and flexible.

Secondly, the pilot venture tested the adequacy and relevancy of the checklist and questions formulated for the sample interviews (De Vos, 2002:282, 298). During the pilot interviews, the researcher realised that the respondents were not clear on the nature of sexual abuse. The researcher did not, on purpose, explain the nature of sexual abuse before the interviews commenced because she wanted the respondents to reveal their own understanding of what they regarded as abuse and what not.

This, however, was not successful. Both the respondents asked the researcher to define sexual abuse before they took part in the discussion. From this the researcher realised that either the respondents were not well known with the nature of sexual abuse, or they were not confident that their own understandings were correct. The researcher decided to

discuss the nature of sexual abuse, as discussed in the previous chapter, with the respondents before the sample interviews commenced.

The researcher found that apart from the uncertainty regarding the nature of sexual abuse, the rest of the interviewing process sufficient to collect the relevant data. The pre-formulated discussion topics elicited purposeful conversation, and the formulated questions adequately guided and focused the interviews. Therefore the researcher did not make any changes to the discussion topics or the formulated questions of the sample interviews.

3.4.4.3 Interview procedures

Before an interview took place, the researcher established a comfortable atmosphere. The researcher asked the respondent some questions about the different ministries of his/her congregation, its members and the respondent's involvement in the congregation. After this, the researcher clarified the purpose of the research as well as the interviewing procedures. The respondent was also reminded that the interview was audiotaped. The researcher then answered any questions the respondent might have had.

If the respondent had no questions, the researcher commenced the interview by asking the first formulated question. From there on, the researcher steered clear of asking the formulated questions, but rather posed to explore the topics on the checklist. This ensured that the interviews were not "question-and-answer" sessions, but conversations on the different topics (De Vos, 2002: 303).

While conducting the interviews, the researcher applied the following interviewing techniques, as described by De Vos (2002:293 - 294), which helped to conduct the interviews with confidence and ease:

- The researcher should let the respondent talk 90% of the interviews time;

- The researcher should ask follow-up questions if she does not understand the respondent's answer clearly;
- The researcher should not be scared of silent pauses during the interview because it allows the respondent time to think about the question being asked;
- Be aware of how the respondent participates in the interview. The respondent's body language and tone of voice may also reveal some valuable information.

De Vos (2002:295 – 296) also identifies some challenges a researcher may face when conducting individual interviews. Knowing these challenges helped the researcher to prepare alternatives in case these challenges appear during the interviews. Some of the challenges are:

- Various forms of interruption may occur during the interview e.g. ringing doorbells or telephones. These interruptions break the concentration of both the researcher and the respondent. Great care needs to be taken to establish concentration again;
- Some respondents may develop 'stage fright' because of the use of an audiotape recorder. It might make the respondent feel uncomfortable. The researcher made an effort not to let the recorder be a disruption by placing the tape recorder where it was not directly visible to the respondent;
- An interview always has the risk of being superficial, if the researcher does not spend enough time to get to know the respondent before commencing with the interview. To avoid this, the researcher firstly engaged in conversation with the respondent regarding his/her involvement in their congregations, etc.

Once all the topics on the checklist had been explored and discussed, the researcher allowed the respondent some time to ask questions or to add any further information that he/she felt necessary. If there were no questions or added information, the researcher thanked the respondent for his/her time, and ended the interview. The researcher also undertook to send the respondent a transcription of the audio taped interview, with the

purpose of the respondent making sure that everything he/she said was correctly recorded and transcribed. This procedure raises the credibility of the research (De Vos, 2002:305).

3.5 Data capturing and editing

The information collected from the sample interviews was captured by means of an audiotape recorder. The recording was made with the written consent of the respondents. One advantage of audiotape recording is that it provides more complete information than notes taken by the researcher during an interview. The researcher's focus is thereby on the conversation with the respondent, and not on taking notes in order to capture all the required information required (De Vos, 2002:304).

Audiotape recording does, however, have a drawback. When transcribing the interviews, the researcher cannot remember the facial expressions and body language of the respondent. It is therefore important for the researcher to take note of any peculiar or uncommon body language expressed by the respondent during the interview.

During the data-capturing phase, the researcher followed some of De Vos' (2002:340-345) guidelines to ensure that this phase contributed to an efficient and trouble-free analysis phase. These guidelines include that the researcher take great care in labeling each audiotape correctly and clearly to guarantee easy retrieval. The researcher should also keep record of every respondent's contact details as well as the date, time and place where every interview takes place. This record can be valuable if a respondent needs to be contacted again.

Once an interview had been completed, the researcher transcribed the interview verbatim. Poland's (in Henning et al., 2004:163-164) standard notes for transcriptions were used in order for all the transcriptions to be of the same format. This format allows ample space for the researcher to write on and 'work the data'. The transcription was then edited of any meaningless information, and sent to the respondents for their approval. Once the respondents had given their approval, the interviews were analysed.

3.6 Data analysis

The data was analysed by means of basic content analysis procedures (Henning et al., 2002:104-108). The first stage of the analysis is known as open coding, where the data is intensively examined and taken apart into different units of meaning. The researcher read through the interview transcriptions, and demarcated every sentence or phrase that forms a unit of meaning.

Following this process, the researcher conceptualised the different units of meaning by assigning a code to each unit. As the researcher read through the data, she kept the different codes already assigned in mind, and assigned the same label to reoccurring or similar units of meaning. This was done to avoid confusion as well as too many labels (Henning et al., 2002:105).

After the labels had been assigned, the researcher examined the codes in search of correlations. Correlating codes were then grouped into categories (Henning et al., 2002:106). The researcher then titled the different categories according to the contents of the labels it hold.

“Once all the sets of data have been coded and categorised the researcher is left with the all important task of seeing the whole.” (Henning et al., 2004:106). In an attempt to ‘see the whole’, the researcher examined the different categories for possible correlations and differences. The result of this examination was the identification of different themes that all related to the research question. These identified themes are discussed accordingly in the following paragraphs.

3.7 Research findings

The following is an exposition of the research findings according to the themes that emerged from the data analysis. The contents of the first three themes were determined

by the topics and questions, which guided the interviews¹⁵. However, since the interviews were semi-structured, some important yet unexpected themes emerged from the interviews. All these themes, expected and unexpected, are vital to the attempt to answer the research question.

It is important to note that the interviews were conducted with individuals (not necessarily ministers) whose opinions represented that of their congregations. It is, however, possible that not all the congregants of the different congregations represented will agree with these opinions.

3.7.1 Themes determined by the topics explored during the interviews

3.7.1.1 **Theme 1: Congregations' awareness of the sexual abuse of adolescent female victims**

- Seven respondents became aware of abuse by listening to stories people tell on the streets. For example, both Respondents A and B who are very active and trusted by the community, said that people they meet on the street (not necessarily congregants) confides in them;
- Three respondents became aware through contact with social workers;
- Two respondents became aware while counseling people. For example, Respondent E emphasized the fact that his congregation does a lot of counseling and through this counseling they become aware of abuse and take the cases further;
- Two respondents became aware through the reports of congregation members. For example, Respondent A told of some Sunday school teachers that have reported cases of abuse being disclosed by the children to them;
- Two respondents became aware by reading the local newspaper;
- One respondent became aware through involvement with adolescents. In this regard, Respondent C said: “...my own children are at school and they have

¹⁵ See the discussion on individual interviews as method of data collection on page 50 to 56.

friends who have been abused. And they speak to each other about it and then they will come and tell me.”

3.7.1.2 Theme 2: Congregations’ involvement with the support of adolescent female victims of sexual abuse

- Two respondents indicated their congregations are definitely involved with victims. These two respondents identified the following as ways of being involved with the support of the victims:
 - Providing a safe place for the victim to stay;
 - Contacting the police;
 - Offering counseling to the victim;
 - Offering counseling to the victim’s family.
- One respondent indicated that his congregation is not directly involved with victims, but is involved with organizations supporting victims. This respondent indicated that his congregation financially supports a safe house for victims and a social welfare organization.
- One respondent indicated her congregation is not involved as congregation, but has an individual who works with these victims in the community. This respondent herself educates female adolescents concerning sex, as part of her occupation as nurse in the community clinic. She also offers support to the parents of adolescents who are pregnant.
- Four respondents indicated their congregations are not involved at all.

3.7.1.3 Theme 3: Reasons why certain congregations are not involved with female adolescent victims of sexual abuse

This topic directly relates to the research question. It was explored with **the four congregations who indicated they were not involved with the support of adolescent female victims of sexual abuse**. Some of the congregations indicated more than one reason for their lack of involvement:

- All four respondents indicated that their congregations are not involved because they are not aware of the prevalence of abuse in their congregations¹⁶;
- Three respondents' congregations are not involved because they do not have specific ministries focusing on abuse;
- Two respondents attributed their congregations' lack of involvement to their lack of knowledge about the nature of sexual abuse. Respondent B said that *"if the congregation has some form of training and they become aware what sexual abuse is all about, they will become involved with the victims."*
- One respondent indicated that his congregation will immediately refer a victim to a social worker.

It is important to note that even though these congregations are not involved with the support of adolescent female victims of sexual abuse, they are willing to become involved should they become aware of such incidence. As Respondent B indicated: *"No, we are not directly involved with the support of victims of sexual abuse. But if we come to know of such cases, we will become involved in whatever way we can."*

3.7.1.4 Theme 4: Respondents' suggestions for congregations to become involved with the support of adolescent female victims of sexual abuse

The following are suggestions the respondents made on how they could become more involved, directly and indirectly, with the victims of sexual abuse:

¹⁶ This specific finding is in contradiction to the first finding of 7.1.1. A discussion on these findings follows in the next chapter.

Direct involvement:

- Four respondents indicated counseling as a way of involvement, as Respondent C indicated, ministers are trained in pastoral counseling and can offer counseling free of charge, as money is often an issue for people;
- One respondent proposed to offer victims a safe place to stay. Respondent E provided a chilling example of this suggestion: *“The other day a young woman phoned me and said that her boyfriend abuses her, what should she do? I wanted to tell her – but you are living in sin with this man. You cannot expect the blessing of the Lord when you live in sin. But then she said, pastor, if you can give me some other place to stay, I am out of here by tomorrow. But right now, I have a roof over my head for me and my child. She said ‘orphans have orphanages, old people have old age homes, but what do I have?’*
- One respondent suggested congregants become volunteers at a safe house;
- One respondent suggested congregants should not be judgmental towards victims, rather to reach out to them;
- One respondent noted that congregations should offer spiritual support and guidance to the victims.

Indirect involvement:

- Four respondents recommend that congregations should offer positive gender role models, who could build trusting relationships with the youth;
- Two respondents suggested talking to young people about sex, and warning them about the dangers of premarital sex;
- Two respondents proposed informing congregants about the nature of abuse;
- Two respondents advised that congregations should share testimonies of healing in their worship service;
- One respondent suggested congregations offer financial help to organizations rendering services to victims of abuse;
- One respondent suggested the congregations should create awareness in the community about the prevalence of abuse;

- One respondent suggested that congregations become part of networks and form multi disciplinary teams to treat victims of abuse.

3.7.2 Themes that emerged from the data collected during the interviews:

The following are unexpected themes that emerged from the analysed data. The researcher regards these themes as vital to the answer of the research question.

3.7.2.1 Theme 5: Different parties involved with the abuse

From the data it is evident that sexual abuse not only involves a victim and an abuser, but also their families:

Abuser's relation to the victim:

- Four respondents presumed that the abuser is usually a family member, as Respondent E: *"She [the respondent's wife] has counseled a few girls who have been molested by their grandfathers. And there is much pain and trauma involved."*
- Two respondents said the abuser is not necessarily a family member, but is often known to the victim.

The victim's family:

- Three respondents indicated that the mother of the victim often knows about the abuse, but is too scared to talk about it. Respondent F said: *"When a father abuses his own child, the mother is often too scared to do anything because it will cause trouble with her husband. So she keeps quiet."*
- One respondent was of opinion that a strong family structure protects children against abuse;
- One respondent acknowledged that the victim's family is also affected by the abuse. Respondent E provided an example: *"You know, what happens many*

times is that the parents reacts emotionally and chases the girl out of the house...sometimes the parents' pride stand in their way to take the child back."

- One respondent noted that when the abuser is a family member, the victim would probably remain silent in order to avoid family conflict.

3.7.2.2 Theme 6: The silence regarding the prevalence of abuse

The data revealed several reasons for the victims' and the community's silence regarding the prevalence of sexual abuse:

The victim:

- Three respondents indicated the victim might not trust anybody enough to talk about what is happening to her;
- Three respondents attributed the silence to the victim's fear of breaking up her family;
- Three respondents indicated that the victim remains silent because she is scared and ashamed;
- Two respondents proposed a fear of the abuser's revenge as reason for a victim to remain silent about the abuse. Respondent F said that he knew about a girl how was raped at knife point and afterwards the rapist threatened to kill her if she would go to the police. He also knew of pregnant girls who would not reveal the identity of the fathers because they fear his possible revenge.
- Two respondents regarded the victim's fear of the judicial procedures as a reason for silence;
- One respondent held the authoritative position of the abuser, e.g. a school teacher or a community leader, as a reason for the victim's silence;

The community:

- Six respondents indicated that the community is not eager to talk about sexual matters in public, let alone sexual abuse, as Respondent A indicated: *"Each time we experience that sex is a taboo subject. This is a very old, traditional*

point of view, but it still influences people here. People will not witness in a trial because they don't want to talk openly about sex.”;

- Three respondents indicated that the community remains silent in order to uphold their ‘image’, pride and honour. Respondent E’s response is a good example: *“I think it is all about upholding a certain ‘image’, people don’t want the rest of the community to find out about it. Even school principals do not want the police to work in their school when there are rumours of drugs, because they fear the damage to the school’s image.”*
- Three respondents suggested that the community and they themselves fear the revenge of the abuser if they report the abuse to the police, or testify in court. Respondent F’s gave a clear example of his own fear: *“I cannot testify in court because the criminal’s friends are inside the court, they will see me, and they will come back for me. My children, my house and my car will be in danger. So I then keep quiet.”*

3.7.2.3 Theme 7: Perceptions regarding abuse in the Paarl community

The data revealed some perceptions held by the different congregations, especially regarding the prevalence of abuse in the eastern part of Paarl:

- Two respondents, from the western and southern parts of Paarl, perceived that sexual abuse is more prevalent in Paarl East than in the rest of Paarl. Respondent E: *“But in the east [Paarl] community, they are open to talk about tik and all that. All the same with sexual abuse. They are more open than us.”*
- One respondent perceived abuse happening more often in places of poor socio-economic class;
- One respondent, from the southern part of Paarl, perceived the people of Paarl East to talk more freely about abuse, due to the higher prevalence there than in the rest of Paarl.

3.7.2.4 Theme 8: Theological thoughts

During the interviews, some theological thoughts on several aspects regarding abuse, surfaced:

- Three respondents indicated the church should be a community of healing. Respondent C said that the church is God's light carrier in the world and owns the secrets of the Kingdom of God. Therefore he sees the church as an alternative community, especially with regards to healing. He sees theological concepts, such as forgiveness, as the "...*playing field of the church.*"
- Three respondents believe sexual abuse is not the will of God and is caused by sin. Respondent A said: "*I think if you understand the gospel, it is each [Christian] leader's role to speak about it, to discuss it and to tell people it is not the will of God.*"
- Two respondents indicated the gospel motivates their congregations' involvement with victims;
- Two respondents suggested that evangelization should be part of the service a congregation can offer the victims of abuse;
- One respondent acknowledged the spiritual effects sexual abuse can have on a victim.

3.8. Conclusion

The first function of this chapter was to report on the methods used by the researcher to determine why congregations in Paarl are not involved as organizations with the support of adolescent female victims of sexual abuse. The data collection method of basic semi-structured individual interviews was introduced and the way these interviews were implemented, was explained. Subsequently the method of the qualitative content analysis process, and the way it was applied, were described.

The second function of this chapter was to present the research findings. Certain themes emerged from the analysed data. Some of the themes were unexpected but nonetheless

important. These unexpected themes led the researcher to the conclusion that the data collection phase, with all its hold-ups and unforeseen events, went well.

The next chapter focuses on a discussion of the identified themes in relation to the research question and the theory discussed in the literature study.

CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION ON RESEARCH FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDED GUIDELINES FOR CONGREGATIONS

4.1 Introduction

The first purpose of this chapter is to discuss the research findings that were presented in the previous chapter. To reach this purpose, the researcher will interpret the research findings and relate the findings to the literature study of the second chapter. These findings include the congregations' awareness of the prevalence of sexual abuse, the different ways congregations are involved with the support of victims, reasons why congregations are not involved, as FBO's, with the adolescent female victims of sexual abuse in the Paarl community and lastly, the suggestions made by the respondents on how congregations could become involved with the support of victims. Secondly, this chapter has the purpose of recommending guidelines to congregations, based on the research findings, regarding their involvement with the adolescent female victims of sexual abuse.

4.2 Congregations' awareness of the prevalence of sexual abuse

4.2.1 Trust relationships

From the research findings it became apparent that the respondents became aware of sexual abuse by means of some kind relationship with an adolescent, congregant or community member. Based on this finding, it is evident to the researcher that trust relationships are imperative in the unmasking of sexual abuse of adolescent females. The respondents' awareness by means of relationships also signifies that such trust relationships have already been established with adolescents, congregants and community members. This research finding confirms Parkinson's (1997:202) statement that religious leaders (ministers, youth workers, Sunday school teachers) are often the first to hear

about incidences of abuse due to the relationship of trust they foster with the community. Kearney (2001:34) specifically mentions that adolescents will disclose sexual abuse to an adult whom they trust, mostly a youth worker or Sunday school teacher.

4.2.1.1 Mandatory reporting

When taking the abovementioned research findings, as well as both Parkinson's and Kearney's statements into consideration, the researcher is dismayed that religious leaders are not yet included in the Child Care act's list of specified mandatory reporters of sexual abuse¹⁷. The researcher is of opinion by including religious leaders in the mandatory reporters list it will ensure that abuse is reported more often. The victims will benefit by not having to deal with the abuse's effects alone. Yet, on the other hand, the researcher wonders whether victims, or any other person who knows about abuse, would trust religious leaders less if these leaders were legally obliged to report incidences of sexual abuse?

Whether religious leaders are added to the list of mandatory reporters of sexual abuse or not, the researcher agrees to Kearney's (2001:34) guideline that religious leaders should not offer confidentiality when a victim discloses sexual abuse. The researcher is of opinion that once a victim has disclosed sexual abuse, the religious leader should encourage the victim co-operation to report the abuse to the authorities.

4.2.1.2 Effects of sexual abuse on adolescent females

The effects of sexual abuse on adolescent female victims also highlight the importance of trust relationships congregations build with adolescents¹⁸. Spies et al. (1998:373) mention that a victim's ability to trust is severely damaged by sexual abuse. When congregations build personal relationships with adolescents, the victims are thereby encouraged to trust someone without the fear of getting hurt.

¹⁷ See chapter two, page 39 for a discussion on religious leaders and mandatory reporting.

¹⁸ See chapter two, page 32-38 for a discussion on the effects of sexual abuse on adolescent female victims.

The victim's faith issues, as well as guilt and shame, could hamper her willingness to disclose the abuse to a religious leader. The victim may feel as if she is responsible for the abuse (Kearney, 2001:73), or wonders why God has allowed this awful ordeal (Parkinson, 1997:143; Tam, 2001:116). Therefore, the researcher believes the congregations' relationship with adolescents are paramount to assist the victims to deal with the effects of guilt and shame. Congregations also have an important role to play in guiding victims to answer the theological questions raised due to the abuse. If this is not done, victims may abandon their faith in God altogether.

4.2.2 Networks and multi-disciplinary teams

The fact that three of the respondents became aware of abuse as result of contact with a social worker indicates to the researcher the importance for congregations to be part of networks and multi-disciplinary teams. It is the researcher's opinion that congregations alone cannot put an end to sexual abuse. The effects of sexual abuse are not only emotional and spiritual, but also physical and social. Therefore, it is important for a victim to be treated and counseled holistically. Congregations need to be part of multi-disciplinary teams to handle such cases.

Unfortunately the different churches' responses to sexual abuse, as discussed in the second chapter¹⁹, do not specifically urge congregations to become part of networks or multi-disciplinary teams. The response of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the South African Council of Churches and the Dutch Reformed Church motivates congregations to be involved in the war on sexual abuse²⁰, but do not indicate or suggest how it should be done.

It is the researcher's opinion that, even though the different churches' leaderships do not specifically mention that congregations should become part of networks and multi-disciplinary teams, there are several other motivators. The first motivator is the statistics

¹⁹ See chapter two, page 43.

²⁰ Ibid

on the incidences of rape in South African schools²¹. Taylor and Lutshaba's (2002:13) report that one in three females will be sexually abused before the age of 18, makes it crucial, according to the researcher, for congregations to partner with schools in order to address the problem.

The statistics on the prevalence of adolescent pregnancy, abortion and HIV/AIDS, especially in the Paarl community²², should also highlight the essentiality of clinics and hospitals as partners to congregations in the war on sexual abuse. In 2005, the Koinonia Youth Center (2005:4) in Paarl indicated that 91 legal abortions have been performed on females younger than 18 years. The researcher is convinced, though it has not been empirically proven, that the figures of illegal abortions are much higher. The researcher wonders how many of these unwanted pregnancies were caused by sexual abuse.

Lastly, the discussion on the legal justice procedure²³ also highlighted several key partners. These partners include the police, doctors, social workers and prosecutors. Congregations could partner with these role players in order to assist victims with the legal justice procedure.

4.3 Congregations' involvement with adolescent female victims of sexual abuse

From the eight congregations interviewed, only four are directly or indirectly involved with the victims of sexual abuse. This finding is similar to the findings of Erasmus and Mans' (2005:145) study²⁴ which indicated that only two of the 24 congregations interviewed by them were involved, as FBO's, with victims of sexual abuse. Erasmus and Mans' study also showed that 72,5% of the 1 800 community members interviewed, expected congregations to be directly involved with the victims of sexual abuse²⁵. Based on these findings, the researcher is alarmed that so few congregations are involved when

²¹ See chapter one, page three and chapter two, page 29 for a discussion on the prevalence of rape in South African schools.

²² See chapter two, page 24.

²³ See chapter two, pages 38-42.

²⁴ See chapter one, page five and six.

²⁵ Ibid.

the needs of the victims and the expectancy of the community cry for congregations to be involved.

From the basic individual interviews conducted by the researcher, only four congregations were identified to be involved, as FBO's, with the adolescent female victims of sexual abuse. Two were *directly* involved with victims. These two congregations physically provide victims with a safe place to stay, contact and assist the police with their investigation and offer counseling to victims and their families.

The remaining two congregations are *indirectly* involved with the victims by providing financial help to shelters for victims of sexual abuse and social welfare organizations. This type of involvement does help both victims and the organizations rendering services to the victims.

The researcher is positive about the four congregations who are involved, as FBO's, with the victims of sexual abuse. Whether directly or indirectly involved, these four congregations contribute to the health and well-being of the victims. The researcher is also positive about the fact that all four of these congregations are already involved through some network or team e.g. the police or a shelter, strengthening the already existing effort to end sexual abuse.

Yet, the researcher is concerned that none of the respondents indicated that their congregations are pro-actively involved with the prevention of sexual abuse. This concern urges the researcher to question the statements by the different church leaderships for congregations to become actively involved in the war against sexual abuse²⁶. Is the call for congregations to act preventatively against sexual abuse in their community, feasible? How do church leaderships expect congregations to be pro-actively involved when 50% of this research's sample congregations are not involved with the prevention of sexual abuse at all?

²⁶ See discussion in chapter two, page 43-44.

4.4 Reasons why congregations are not involved with the victims of sexual abuse

The research findings pose to answer the research question: why are congregations as faith based *organizations* in the Paarl community not involved with the adolescent female victims of sexual abuse?

4.4.1 Lack of awareness of the prevalence of sexual abuse

The most common reason given by the respondents for the lack of their congregations' involvement reveals a discrepancy. All eight respondents named several ways their congregations became aware of the abuse²⁷. However, when respondents were asked why their congregations were not involved with the victims, the respondents contributed it to a lack of knowledge concerning the prevalence of abuse within their congregation. There is thus a discrepancy between awareness and involvement.

4.4.1.1 Discrepancy between awareness and involvement

The identified discrepancy between congregations' awareness and involvement can be interpreted in more than one way. Do congregations overlook or choose to ignore the prevalence of abuse in their midst, or is there in fact no one being abused in their congregations? The researcher is not convinced that the respondents either overlooked or ignored the prevalence of abuse in their congregations. However, the researcher is alarmed that congregations only seem to be willing to become involved should the victim be one of their congregants. The researcher concluded that congregations do not respond to the prevalence of sexual abuse in the greater Paarl community.

4.4.1.2 Absence of a specific ministry

The above interpretation is affirmed by the respondents' second reason for their congregations' lack of involvement: the absence of specific ministries that focus on the

²⁷ See research findings in chapter three, page 59-60.

victims of sexual abuse²⁸. From this finding, the researcher realized the respondents equate a specific ministry to congregational involvement. Furthermore, it is clear that one of the reasons why there are no ministries addressing the prevalence of sexual abuse is that respondents do not experience sexual abuse as reality within their congregation. Once again, it is apparent to the researcher, that despite the cry for help from the greater community, the congregations in Paarl are only willing to become involved should their own congregants fall victim to sexual abuse.

4.4.1.3 Silence of victims, their families and the community

Congregations' awareness of the prevalence of sexual abuse of female adolescents is directly influenced by the victims' willingness to report the abuse. Many victims choose to remain silent about the abuse. Yet, it is obvious that when a victim remains silent, no one can help her²⁹.

The issue of silence regarding the prevalence of sexual abuse is a theme that spontaneously emerged from the collected data. It became apparent that victims, their families and the community tend to keep silent³⁰. This silence is noted throughout literature (Parkinson, 1997:1-3; Maart, 2000:151, Madu & Peltzer, 2003:119). The reasons for their silence differ though.

The most frequent reason for victims' silence, as indicated by the respondents³¹, is the victims' lack of trust to disclose the abuse. There is no trustworthy adult or friend to which a victim can turn to. This may be a result of the shame and guilt felt by the victim – some of the many effects caused by sexual abuse³². The importance of establishing and developing trust relationships has already been discussed earlier in this chapter. The respondents' indications are another affirmation of the significance of trust relationships with victims of sexual abuse can play.

²⁸ See chapter three, page 61.

²⁹ See research findings in chapter three, pages 64-65.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ See chapter three, page 61.

³² See chapter two, pages 32-38 for a discussion on the effects of sexual abuse.

The silence could also be contributed to the victim's fear for abuser's revenge or the authoritative position he holds in her family and/or society³³. This finding provoked another theme within the collected data, namely the victim's relation to the abuser. Half of the respondents perceived the abuser as usually a family member, and one quarter said the abuser is not necessarily a family member, but is definitely known to the victim³⁴. These findings confirm the statements made by Parkinson (1997:10) and Kaplan (2000:493) that the abuser is more often than not, known to the victim³⁵.

The fact that 50% of the respondents indicated that abuse takes place within families, caused the researcher to be concerned by the troubled state of families in the Paarl community. As Louw et al. (1998:314) indicate the family is the primary sanctuary where a child learns to interact with people and about the norms and values of his culture. If this space is filled with violence and abuse, the common perception is that the child will also become an abuser. As have been discussed in chapter two, the researcher does not believe that all children who were exposed to abuse, become abusers. However, when families keep silent about the abuse, as seen in the research findings, the researcher fears that the victims will keep silent too. Three respondents indicated that the mother of a victim often knows about the sexual abuse of her child, but chooses to remain silent to avoid conflict with her husband³⁶.

4.4.1.4 Perceptions regarding the prevalence of sexual abuse

Another theme that also spontaneously emerged from the collected data is certain perceptions regarding the prevalence of sexual abuse. It is the researcher's opinion that these perceptions may contribute to congregations' lack of awareness.

A common perception amongst the respondents from the western and southern parts of Paarl is that sexual abuse is more prevalent in the lower socio-economic community of

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ See chapter three, page 63.

³⁵ See discussion in chapter two, page 29.

³⁶ See chapter three, page 63.

Paarl East. Another perception is that people from Paarl East are more willing to talk about the prevalence of abuse than people from the rest of Paarl community³⁷. Yet one of the two respondents, who indicated that victims remain silent because they fear the abuser's revenge, belongs to a congregation in Paarl East³⁸. Both the respondents from Paarl East were also of those who indicated that the community is not eager to talk about sexual abuse³⁹. It is therefore clear that perceptions can be misleading if not based on reality.

However, false perceptions could influence congregations' perspective on the prevalence of sexual abuse in their own midst. It is possible, according to the researcher, that congregations may think that sexual abuse is only prevalent in Paarl East. This could possibly lead to insensitivity towards any signs of abuse in their own midst.

These perceptions also strengthen the researcher's opinion that congregations reserve their involvement should one of their own congregants fall victim to sexual abuse. Congregations that have the perception that sexual abuse is more prevalent in the eastern part of Paarl, stand the danger of shifting the reality of sexual abuse away from the heart and the real mission of their congregation. The prevalence of sexual abuse could then be considered as somebody else's problem which *they* must attend to. This line of thinking confirms Parkinson's (1997:2) statement that congregations tend to see sexual abuse as a problem '*out there*'.

4.4.1.5 Theological thoughts

At this point the researcher connects the involvement of congregations to some of the theological thoughts that emerged from the data collected. Three respondents indicated that the church should be a community of healing⁴⁰. This finding concurs with the DRC leadership's statement that congregations should offer a healing process to victims

³⁷ See chapter three, page 65.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ See chapter three, page 66.

(www.ngkerk.org.za/notule5Junie2007.doc). The motivation for being a community of healing is rooted in the Gospel. Both the respondents whose congregations were involved as FBO's viewed their involvement as obedience to what the Gospel requires of the church⁴¹. The researcher also understands that the Gospel, according to Matthew chapter 22, compels every believer to love his neighbour, and to bring hope where hope is lost.

Another theological thought that emerged from the collected data, is the issue of sin. Three respondents indicated that sexual abuse is not the will of God and is caused by sin⁴². This finding is concurrent with the media statement of the South African Catholic Bishops Conference that condemned sexual abuse as a moral evil and a reprehensible crime (SACBS, 2003).

The above theological research findings point out that some congregations in the Paarl community do think theologically about the brokenness of this world and their involvement as organizations with this brokenness. The researcher is disappointed, though, with the small number of respondents who spoke theologically about sexual abuse. The researcher agrees with Parkinson's (1997:2) idea that when congregations avoid discussing the issue of sexual abuse, or regard it as something '*out there*', victims will not feel comfortable and safe enough to disclose their abuse. Victims will remain silent, hampering congregations' awareness of the abuse. And then, as Parkinson (1997:2) rightly states: "*...we will not be able to minister to them the love and grace of Christ, and to be sensitive to their needs as members of the church family.*"

4.4.2 Lack of knowledge about the nature of sexual abuse

The second reason indicated by respondents why their congregations are not involved with adolescent female victims of sexual abuse, is a lack of knowledge about the nature of sexual abuse⁴³. This finding presupposes that knowledge leads to action and involvement. Parkinson (1997:5) also has this presumption when he argues that

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ See chapter three, page 61.

congregations, who are informed on what victims of abuse have experienced, can establish more effective ministries to them. The statement of the Dutch Reformed Church's leadership, released during the general synod meeting of June 2007, also motivates congregations to '*be ready*' to take care of victims of sexual abuse not only within their congregations but also in the rest of the community⁴⁴. The researcher interprets this readiness that congregations should, amongst other things, be informed on the nature of sexual abuse.

Yet, the researcher is not convinced that *knowledge* of the nature of abuse alone will automatically motivate congregations to become involved with victims. Congregations are already aware of the prevalence of abuse in the Paarl community. Still, this knowledge and awareness do not seem to be enough to convince congregations to become involved with the victims.

It is not the researcher's purpose to disregard the value of *knowledge* of the nature of sexual abuse. The researcher is of opinion that having knowledge of the nature of sexual abuse is imperative when one keeps in mind that religious leaders are often the first to hear of abuse. Knowledge of the nature of sexual abuse should help congregants to be more sensitive to the prevalence of abuse and to be more aware of the warning signs of abuse. This knowledge could also cultivate empathy with the victims of abuse.

4.5 Respondents' suggestions for congregations to become involved with adolescent female victims of sexual abuse

When asked to suggest some ways congregations could become involved, as FBO's, with the adolescent females victims of sexual abuse, respondents made several suggestions for re-active and pro-active involvement⁴⁵. The most common suggestion for re-active involvement was to offer counseling to the victim. The respondents were unclear on the type of counseling they suggested. The researcher concerned that only one respondent

⁴⁴ See chapter two, page 44.

⁴⁵ See chapter three, pages 61-62.

specifically mentioned that congregations could offer *spiritual* help and guidance to victims of sexual abuse⁴⁶.

The researcher is of opinion that spiritual help and guidance are of key importance in the victims' lives. The effects of guilt and shame, which often silences victims, can also hamper a victim's ability to trust and to believe that she can be loved unconditionally⁴⁷. These effects could have a profound impact on the victim's faith. The trauma of sexual abuse also compels the victim to raise questions about God (Tam, 2001:166)⁴⁸. Therefore it is paramount that congregations guide them spiritually and help them answer these questions.

Congregations' involvement could extend beyond offering counseling and comfort to victims. They could also make a pro-active contribution to end sexual abuse.

Respondents indicated that the availability of positive gender role models, who can build trust relationships with adolescents, as the most common way a congregation can be pro-actively involved in preventing sexual abuse. This finding confirms the value of trust relationships, as have already been discussed earlier.

Respondents also indicated that congregations should speak to adolescents about sexual matters. The researcher agrees with the respondents, as adolescents are in a time of establishing their sexuality and are exposed to an array of different views.⁴⁹ Even though there is a more openness to talk about sexuality in recent times, Louw (1998:406) states that adolescents still struggle to make responsible decisions regarding responsible sexual behaviour. Congregations could offer clear definitions of what are considered as responsible sexual behaviour, and provide clear guidelines for adolescents to follow.

⁴⁶ See chapter three, page 61.

⁴⁷ See chapter two, pages 36.

⁴⁸ See discussion on the faith issues raised due to the trauma of sexual abuse, in chapter two, pages 36-37.

⁴⁹ See discussion on adolescence and sexuality in the second chapter.

Thus far, this chapter has focused on a discussion of the data collected during the individual interviews. Based on this discussion, the researcher recommends the following:

4.6 Practical theological guidelines to congregations

These guidelines are presented in no particular order of importance. The researcher is of opinion that each of these guidelines on its own will not increase the involvement of congregations, as FBO's, with the victims of sexual abuse. These guidelines are, however, not a plan for congregations to prevent sexual abuse from happening in the first place. Yet, the researcher believes that these guidelines should help congregations to evaluate their current involvement, or lack thereof, with the victims of sexual abuse.

4.6.1 Guideline 1: Evaluate motivation for congregations' involvement theologically

The research findings showed that the congregations that are already involved with the adolescent female victims of sexual abuse draw inspiration and motivation from the Gospel to be a community of healing. Therefore the researcher recommends that congregations should reflect *theologically* upon their involvement with the victims. This reflection could entail that congregations search the Bible for relevant scripture, pray together and share testimonies of how they are or should be involved with the adolescent female victims of sexual abuse.

4.6.2 Guideline 2: Break the silence concerning sexual abuse theologically

Based on some of the suggestions the respondents made during the interviews⁵⁰, it is paramount that the silence concerning the issue of sexual abuse should be broken. The researcher recommends that worship services should be used to speak about sexual abuse and related theological issues e.g. is sexual abuse a sin, where is God in such situations, etc. A worship service is an opportunity to create awareness amongst congregants

⁵⁰ See chapter three, pages 61-62.

regarding the prevalence of sexual abuse in the Paarl community and could reflect on the congregations' involvement with the victims. It is also an opportunity to meet the identified need for training of congregants about the nature of sexual abuse⁵¹.

The researcher recommends that not only the issue of sexual abuse should be talked about, but also related issues, for example responsible sexual behaviour. The researcher is of opinion that conversations regarding responsible sexual behaviour should not be limited to adolescents, as the whole congregation should partake in discussions. This way the whole congregation could become aware of what is regarded as responsible sexual behaviour.

It is also the researcher's opinion that gender role models can play an immense role in the lives of adolescents. Yet, the researcher believes that the example set by the role models will not have the desired effect on adolescents when there is no established trust relationship between them and the role models.

4.6.3 Guideline 3: Develop trust relationships with adolescents and key role players

During the discussion on the research findings, the concept of trust relationships surfaced time and again. Therefore, the researcher recommends that congregations prioritize the development of trust relationships with adolescents. The researcher recommends that relationships should be developed on the school grounds and on the sport fields. To develop and establish this kind of relationship, more trained role models should be present on a daily basis in the everyday life of adolescents, for example youth workers or ministers who are involved in schools. Therefore, congregations need to build trust relationships not only with adolescents but also with key role players (e.g. schools) in the community in order to address the issue of sexual abuse.

⁵¹ See chapter three, page 62.

4.6.4 Guideline 4: Become part of community networks

The researcher regards partnerships with other key role players (social workers, police, schools, health care professionals, shelters and safe houses, etc.) as imperative for congregations as they alone cannot win the war on sexual abuse. Being a partner in a community network will not only heighten congregations' awareness of sexual abuse in the community, but also present the opportunity for them to become involved with adolescent female victims in the *whole* Paarl community. Being part of a network could also involve congregations in prevention programs which are already implemented by social services or other organizations.

4.7 Conclusion

The first purpose of this chapter was to discuss the research findings that were presented in the previous chapter. The researcher interpreted the findings and related it to relevant literature.

The researcher concluded that the answer to the research question *why are congregations in the Paarl community not involved as organizations with the female adolescent victims of sexual abuse?* is a complex one. The research findings indicated that a lack of awareness of the prevalence of abuse seems to be the main reason. However the research findings also exposed a discrepancy between awareness and involvement, for preceding research findings indicated that all congregations are aware of abuse taking place in the Paarl community. Therefore, the researcher reached the conclusion that congregations as FBO's in the Paarl community are *by choice* not involved with the adolescent female victims of sexual abuse.

Concerning congregations' knowledge of the nature of sexual abuse, the researcher is not convinced that knowledge alone will motivate congregations to become involved. Nonetheless, the researcher agrees that congregations should be informed about the nature of sexual abuse as religious leaders are often the first to hear of sexual abuse.

The second purpose of the chapter was to recommend some guidelines, based on the discussion of the research findings, to congregations concerning their involvement with adolescent female victims of sexual abuse. The researcher recommended that congregations should: evaluate their involvement theologically, break the silence on sexual abuse theologically, prioritize the development of trust relationships with adolescents and also become part of community networks.

The next chapter concludes this research by explaining how the goal and objectives, formulated in the first chapter, were reached. The strengths and weaknesses of this research are also highlighted and suggestions for further research are made.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION TO THE RESEARCH

5.1 Introduction

This final chapter concludes the research. The purpose of this chapter is to revisit the problem statement on which the research question is based and to report on how the goal and objectives of this research have been achieved. Following the report on the research question, goal and objectives, the strengths and weaknesses of this research will be explored. Lastly, recommendations for further research will be made.

5.2 Problem statement and research question

In the first chapter, the researcher presented some newspaper articles from the *Paarl Post*, which reported incidences where adolescent females were victims of sexual abuse, as well as the findings of the URDR's study (2005) on congregations as service providers for victims of sexual and violent crimes in the Paarl community⁵². The URDR found that although the community expects congregations to provide support to these victims, congregations do not seem to do so. Therefore the researcher asked the question: why are congregations in the Paarl community not involved, as FBO's, with the support of adolescent female victims of sexual abuse.

5.3 Research goal and objectives

Once the research question was formulated, the researcher set a goal and objectives that had to be achieved in order to answer the research question. The goal was to explore the reasons why the Paarl community's congregations are not involved, as FBO's, with the support of adolescent female victims of sexual abuse. The researcher realized that the

⁵² See chapter one, page four to six.

issue of sexual abuse is a sensitive one, and that the answer to the research question would be complex. Therefore the researcher formulated certain objectives in order to maintain the focus of this research. These objectives were as follows:

5.3.1 First research objective

The first objective was to report on adolescent female victims' experience of sexual abuse as described in literature. This objective was reached by means of a literature study (chapter two). Literature concerning different aspects of adolescent female sexuality, the nature and effects of sexual abuse on adolescent females and some statements of the Christian church concerning the issue of sexual abuse, were discussed. This report was necessary in order to establish the context of adolescent female victims of sexual abuse.

The researcher experienced some difficulty in finding literature that specifically described the effects of sexual abuse on adolescent females. Most of the available literature focuses on child sexual abuse (ages 3 to 12) and the adult survivors of child sexual abuse.

5.3.2 Second research objective

The second research objective was to identify, through empirical research, reasons why congregations in Paarl are not involved as FBO's with the support of adolescent female victims of sexual abuse. The researcher conducted basic individual interviews with eight religious leaders, not necessarily ministers, of congregations from the Paarl community (chapter three).

From the researcher's interpretation of the data collected during the interviews (chapter four), it became evident that there are two main reasons why congregations are not involved with the support of adolescent female victims of sexual abuse. The first reason is contributed to the lack of awareness of the prevalence of abuse in the community. The

second is due to the lack of knowledge concerning the nature of sexual abuse. These two reasons are, however, more complex than meets the eye⁵³.

5.3.3 Third research objective

The third and final research objective was to propose, from a practical theological perspective, some guidelines for congregations to become involved as FBO's with the support of adolescent female victims of sexual abuse. Based on the literature study and the empirical research findings, the researcher recommended the following guidelines⁵⁴:

Congregations should think and reflect theologically about their motivation to become involved with adolescent female victims of sexual abuse. The researcher was concerned that few of the interviews' respondents mentioned any theological reasons for their motivation to be involved with adolescent female victims of sexual abuse.

Congregations should break the silence during worship services regarding the issue of sexual abuse, by discussing theological questions relating to the abuse. From the literature study and the empirical data collected, the problem of victims, their families and the community's silence surfaced many times. The researcher is of opinion that congregations have a great role to play in breaking this silence.

Congregations should invest in the establishment and development of trust relationships with adolescents, families and the community. From the literature study it became clear that a victim's ability to trust is severely damaged by sexual abuse. The empirical data indicated that trust relationships are the key to end the silence surrounding sexual abuse. Therefore the researcher recommends that congregations should not only invest in trust relationships with adolescents, but also with their families and the community.

⁵³ See chapter four, pages 73-78 for a discussion on the complexity of the matter.

⁵⁴ See chapter four, pages 80-82, for a detailed discussion on these guidelines.

Congregations should become part of a network consisting of key role players e.g. social workers, the police, schools, etc, in order to join forces to act re-actively to the prevalence of sexual abuse and pro-actively to prevent the abuse. Both the discussions of the literature and the empirical data emphasized several key role players with whom congregations in Paarl could partner in order to re-actively and pro-actively address the sexual abuse of adolescent females. Congregations alone cannot combat sexual abuse and therefore they need to join forces with other key role players.

From this discussion on the research goal and objectives, the researcher is of opinion that all the objectives were reached during the research process and therefore the goal of this research has been achieved. Reflecting on the research goal and objectives, the researcher recognized the strengths and weaknesses of this research.

5.4 Strengths of the research

The researcher identified the following strengths of the research:

All the respondents met the criteria set for sampling. Respondents of all the identified areas participated and various church denominations were represented.

The respondents were all willing and open to discuss their experiences and knowledge with regards to the prevalence of sexual abuse in the Paarl community and the support of adolescent female victims of sexual abuse. These attitudes confirmed the appropriateness of the qualitative research approach used to conduct the research.

The questions formulated to guide the basic individual interviews were effective in providing the information needed to answer the research question. The researcher had no difficulty in understanding and interpreting the data collected from the respondents.

The data collected was treated confidentially and the anonymity of the respondents was ensured. None of the respondents' names were mentioned in this research report, neither were any of the congregations they represented singled out in a discussion in this report.

5.5 Weaknesses of the research

Despite the positive aspects, this research did have some weaknesses and limitations:

The researcher experienced, as have already been mentioned earlier in this chapter, difficulty in finding recent scientific literature regarding the effects of sexual abuse on specifically adolescent females. In her search for recent scientific literature, the researcher came across many self-help websites that described the effects of sexual abuse on adolescent females, but only found two recent scientific sources.

The sample of respondents was small in relation to the number of congregations identified in Paarl by the URDR. This was due to the limited budget and resources available to the researcher.

This research regarded the gender of the abuser as male, and did not investigate the possibility that the abuser could be female. The researcher acknowledges that females often abuse one another. Yet, as the majority of adolescent female sexual abuse is perpetrated by males, the researcher chose to define the abuser as male.

5.6 Suggestions for future research

The above discussion on the strengths and weaknesses of this research emphasized some areas in which future research could be done.

Firstly, the researcher suggests that the effects of sexual abuse on specifically adolescent females should be empirically researched. This could help fill the void in the availability of recent scientific literature on this subject.

Secondly, the researcher suggests that adolescent female victims of sexual abuse's experiences and views on the absence of the involvement of congregations should be explored. This research only focused on the views of congregations. The researcher is of opinion that the opinions and views of the victims will complete the picture.

Lastly, the researcher suggests that ways to motivate congregations to become actively involved with the support of adolescent female victims of sexual abuse should be explored. This should not only be done to find ways to motivate congregations, but also to further the Kingdom of God.

5.7 Conclusion

This research was conducted within the discipline of practical theology. As have been discussed in the first chapter, practical theology is concerned with communicating the gospel to all people⁵⁵, especially to adolescent female victims of sexual abuse. From the discussions on the effects of sexual abuse on these victims, it is evident that the abuse has great impact on their faith. Therefore the researcher concludes this research by urging all congregations in Paarl community to act beyond their geographical congregational boundaries and reach out to the many broken lives of adolescent female victims of sexual abuse in the whole of the Paarl community. Only then can congregations become the facilitators of communication between God and the victims, contributing greatly to their healing processes. Adolescent female victims desperately need these process become true survivors of sexual abuse.

⁵⁵ See chapter one, page 14 to 18 for a detailed discussion on the nature of practical theology.

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