

Abstract

The aim of this exploratory study was to explore caregivers' perceptions regarding the emotional development of 6-10 year old children living in a Johannesburg institution. The term institution, for the purposes of this study, refers to a children's home or orphanage. The researcher also aimed to explore through caregivers' reports whether the 6-10 year old children's development, in particular their emotional development, appeared to have been influenced by any attachment difficulties. The study was theoretically grounded in John Bowlby's attachment theory and Erikson's developmental theory. Six participants participated in this qualitative study.

A semi-structured interview schedule was constructed by the researcher to guide the interview process, and thematic content analysis was used to analyse the data. The main themes that emerged from this study relate to the personal experiences of the caregivers that influence their perceptions of attachment difficulties, and the caregivers' perceptions relating to the emotional difficulties and behavioural difficulties experienced by the children living in the children's home, and how these impact upon the children's development. The results are invaluable in gaining an in-depth understanding of the perceptions held by caregivers, and what factors influence these perceptions.