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HYPNOTHERAPY FOR CHILDREN & ADOLESCENTS: THE PERSPECTIVE OF SOUTH AFRICAN PSYCHOLOGISTS

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Abstract

Hypnotherapy has been utilised with children and adolescents for more than 200 years. Despite this fact, there has been no documented research on the use of hypnotherapy for children and adolescents in South Africa. This research focused on the perspectives of qualified South African psychologists on the use of hypnosis as a therapeutic technique for children and adolescents. The aim of the research was to expand on current knowledge and understandings of hypnosis and hypnotherapy, to explore how the technique has been adapted to a South African context and to identify drawbacks found in the use of this technique. The research sample comprised eight qualified psychologists who utilise hypnotherapy with children and adolescents. The research design for this study adopted a qualitative approach in which semi-structured interviews were utilised. Although the technique largely relies on foreign practises that have not been adapted to the South African context, it still proved highly valuable. While the psychologists opinions differed on the ages and conditions for which hypnotherapy could be applied, this seemed to be based on their personal experiences and success rates rather than on inherent limitations of the technique. The educational psychologists who specialised in treating children and adolescents found that there were no limitations on the use of the technique and they were confident in its application for all ages. There was also a prevailing belief, on the part of the psychologists, that black individuals appear to be more responsive to hypnotherapy than other races. The overall findings of this research study suggest that hypnotherapy is a beneficial therapeutic technique for children and adolescents in a South African context. The research aimed to further educational psychologists' knowledge on the applicability of this technique to children and adolescents. With an awareness of its benefits, training by these professionals may be undertaken or the opinions of specialists trained in this area may be sought.

Key Words: Hypnotherapy, Hypnosis, Therapy, Children and Adolescents and Hypnotherapy, Children and Adolescents and Hypnosis, Educational Psychologist in South Africa