

ABSTRACT

Auditory-verbal therapy (AVT) is an intervention approach used as part of an aural (re)habilitation programme conducted by an audiologist with deaf or hard-of-hearing (HOH) children. AVT is a refinement of the oral-aural approach and emphasizes listening instead of visual input. Previous research has focused on AVT in developed countries; however, there is limited available research in developing countries such as South Africa. This study explores and describes the relevance of AVT provided by audiologists in Gauteng, South Africa. The specific objectives of the study were to explore the differences between AVT and general paediatric aural rehabilitation therapies conducted by audiologists; the impact of language on the implementation of AVT and the challenges associated with AVT training. A qualitative research design was used. A purposive sampling strategy was used to identify and recruit participants. Ten audiologists currently conducting aural rehabilitation were selected to participate in the study. The sample size was divided into five audiologists who had obtained the LSL certification (equivalent to AVT certification) and five audiologists without the LSL certification. A pilot study was conducted prior to data collection to determine the applicability of the research study. Thereafter semi-structured interviews were conducted, using an interview schedule. Thematic analysis was employed and themes were described qualitatively. Results revealed the emergence of three resounding themes which included challenges, differences in therapy approaches, and implementation and contributing factors to the success of AVT. The results concluded the need for the implementation of newborn hearing screening programmes to assist with early identification and detection of hearing loss. The study identifies a strong need for the increase in the number of certified LSL therapists in South Africa and additional AVT comprehensive programmes to be implemented at various institutions in Gauteng. Awareness regarding the success of AVT implementation needs to be raised. Finally, the HPCSA needs to revisit and explicitly define the role of audiologists interacting with deaf or HOH children with the LSL qualification being a mandatory postgraduate pre-requisite for working in the field of aural rehabilitation.

Key words: Auditory-verbal therapy; aural rehabilitation; deaf; hard-of-hearing.