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Perceptions of family re-unification and aftercare services for children with behavioural problems discharged from schools of industries

Novela, Tintswalo Shirley

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ABSTRACT

Globally, research has highlighted the undesired consequences of prolonging children's placements in institutionalized care. There is strong research evidence that suggests that almost all areas of children's development are greatly affected when they are disconnected from their families and placed in institutions. The impact varies from impaired interpersonal and social growth, difficulties in establishing secure attachments to care givers, to delayed language and cognitive development. In South Africa (SA), Children's Act (2005) makes provision for the children who display uncontrollable behaviour to be removed from their families and placed in a Child and Youth Care Center (CYCC) as an alternative care in terms of section 150 (1) (b). Despite the legislative recommendation in the different laws aimed at protecting children, SA continues to encounter challenges in terms of family reunification and aftercare services. This study aimed to explore the perceptions of social workers, parents, and children on family reunification services for children with behavioural problems. A qualitative research approach was adopted to collect and analyse data that was collected from focus group discussions (FDGs) as well as individual interviews. The participants were distributed as; 10 parents and children whose data was collected through individual interviews, and six social workers who participated in two separate FDGs. Purposive sampling which is a type of non-probability sampling; was used to select the participants according to the criteria that was set by the researcher. Thematic data analysis was the method used in analyzing data from both the FDGs and individual interviews. Findings in this study revealed that family reunification and aftercare services for children with behavioural problems discharged from Schools of Industries were ineffective and lacked consistency. This study helped to understand the challenges that are experienced by both families and social workers, during family reunification process, and it has suggested ways to improve reunification services rendered to children with behavioural problems and their families.

Key words: Family reunification, aftercare services, social worker, Schools of Industries, Child and Youth Care Centre (CYCC), institution and behavioural problem.