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Quality of the relationship between children abandoned during infancy and their adoptive parents

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Abstract

Literature on adoption and abandonment in South Africa is somewhat limited. As abandonment is a pressing issue in South Africa, it is important to grow the body of literature so that these children and their adoptive families can be given effective help and support. This study focused on the relationship between adoptive parents and their previously abandoned, adopted children. Emphasis was placed on exploring this relationship and capturing the narrative of these adoptive parents as they provided an account of their experiences in adopting an abandoned child. To help guide this exploration, this study looked at how the experience of being abandoned affects the relationship between the adoptive parent and their adopted child. The study then focused on how good enough parenting ameliorated these early adverse experiences and finally explored the type of help sought by adoptive parents to help their children. The research design employed for this study was qualitative in nature and semi-structured interviews were conducted with five adoptive mothers in Johannesburg. Thematic content analysis was used to obtain themes and interpret the data. The findings of this study revealed that the adopting of abandoned children was a challenging journey yet, given that these adoptive mothers have been good enough caregivers to their children, providing them with consistency and stability in care, they have inspired the birth of relationships that feel more secure. In addition, the findings pointed out that the tracking of the relationship between adoptive parents and the adopted child from pre-pubescent years into pubescent years is likely to reveal more about the relationship.