

ABSTRACT

African perspectives of mothering and attachment have only started being explored recently. Conversely there has been extensive research on Western understandings of attachment and mothering from a psychoanalytic perspective. Due to the limited literature, little is known whether psychoanalytic theories can be related to African cultural perspectives of mothering and attachment. This study aimed to understand African grandmothers' cultural knowledge of mothering and attachment through a psychoanalytic attachment theory perspective. Secondly the study intended to describe the points of convergence and divergence between psychoanalytic concepts of attachment and African grandmothers' cultural knowledge on mothering. Using a qualitative research design, nine African grandmothers, from different locations in Johannesburg, were interviewed, using a semi-structured interview. The data gathered from the interviews was analysed using aspects of narrative analysis. The findings regarding African grandmother's cultural descriptions of mothering were on the most part consistent with the literature reviewed. The discrepancies between the participants' understandings and the psychoanalytic attachment literature arose as a result of the major influence of socio-economic circumstances on their lives as caregivers. Psychoanalytic attachment constructs were present in the participant's narratives and even though they were not specifically named by the participants, the results suggested they are entrenched in African cultural practices. Thus, from a psychoanalytic attachment theory perspective the research was able to demonstrate the convergences and divergences between psychoanalytic concepts of mothering and African cultural understandings of mothering, thereby illustrating how there is room for dialogue between the two.