

ABSTRACT

Attachment theory is concerned with the relational ‘tie’ that exists between a mother and her child, which is said to play an imperative role in a child’s mental development and future attachment relationships. Although there is extensive research on attachment theory on an international scale, there is a paucity of information with regard to this in the South African context.

The object of this study is to investigate mothers’ experiences of attachment with their child who has an Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). In addition this research aims to investigate whether this attachment relationship between a mother and her ASD child differs, or is the same across diverse socio-economic groups in the South African context.

This research was qualitative in nature, which elicited rich, descriptive and personal accounts of mothers’ experiences of attachment with their ASD child across diverse socio-economic groups. Twelve participants from advantaged and disadvantaged communities from Johannesburg and the greater Johannesburg area were invited to participate in this study.

Data was gathered through semi-structured interviews and analysed using thematic content analysis. Seven themes emerged from this study which explored mothers’ experiences of attachment with their ASD child. In addition, similarities and differences were found in mothers experiences of attachment across the diverse socio-economic groups.