

ABSTRACT

The primary focus of the research was to explore a siblings' perceptions of the impact a sibling diagnosed with ADHD has on the family system within a South African context. The researcher specifically investigated the participants' experience whilst residing with a sibling with a mental disorder such as ADHD. The impact this had on the family's harmony, resources and interrelationships, was illuminated. The theoretical framework encompassed a discussion of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model. It also includes an overview of Ecosystems Theory, with a specific focus on systemic boundaries and feedback loops.

This study is exploratory and qualitative, focusing on the participants' subjective experiences which were gathered through individual, face to face interviews. Participants were selected by the means of convenience sampling and all ethical considerations such as confidentiality and informed consent were taken into account.

The findings of the research suggested many participants had similar experiences in terms of living with a sibling with ADHD. Some participants experienced a significant difference in the way they were parented as opposed to their ADHD sibling, while others noticed a difference, but did not report it as being noticeably dissimilar. Many participants found that their role as a sibling changed and they often had to take on a more mature and nurturing role. It was established that having a child with ADHD in the home impacted not only on the child as an individual, but on the whole family system. The findings of the research are therefore that the diagnosed ADHD sibling does indeed have an impact on the family system and these impacts are consistent with those reported in the literature.

Keywords: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Sibling Accounts, Parenting Differences.