

ABSTRACT

The primary focus of the research is to explore the caregivers' perceptions of the possible inter-relationship between attachment difficulties and ADHD as displayed by these children within a South African context. The researcher specifically attempted to explore the relationship between attachment and ADHD to identify whether the attachment or lack thereof may contribute to the development of ADHD. The theoretical framework encompasses a discussion of the major styles of attachment using John Bowlby (1982), Mary Ainsworth (1978), Margaret Mahler's (1974) and Peter Fonagy (1995) theories.

This study is exploratory and qualitative, focusing on the caregivers' subjective experiences which were gathered through individual, face to face interviews. Participants were selected by the mean 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 with their children in which many found that the emotional turmoil was more intense than expected, as they realised that raising a child with ADHD had impacts not only on the child as an individual, but on the whole family. Many participants' also experienced difficulties connecting with and understanding the emotional and behavioural development of their child which in turn resulted in various parenting styles and the ultimate relationship they had with their child. The findings of the research therefore suggested that an inter-relationship between attachment and ADHD does exist, however due to the small sample generalisability is limited.

Keywords: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Attachment, Primary Caregiver.