

Natural homes or not: investigating drivers of child delinquency as perceived by caregivers in Zimbabwe's residential care facilities

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Abstract

The study sought to investigate the perspectives of caregivers regarding the occurrence of delinquent behaviours among children residing in care facilities. The research aimed to uncover the factors that caregivers believe contribute to delinquent actions in children placed in residential care institutions. The study used a qualitative research methodology, specifically a phenomenological research design, to collect data from purposefully selected caretakers and key informants. The study included semi-structured interviews as a means of gathering data from both participants and key informants. The research made use of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis for analysing the generated themes. The factors contributing to delinquent behaviour were insecure attachment, single parenting, psychological suffering, emotional resentment, physical abuse and violence, protracted institutional care, and spirit possession. The study's findings have implications for child protection and care, necessitating the creation of a national parenting manual for residential care institutions. This manual should be based on indigenous parenting practices and legal frameworks. Therefore, the results necessitate a revision of existing parenting systems, aiming to strike a balance between the inherent freedom of parents in raising their children and the guidance provided by professional parenting.

Key Terms: caregivers, delinquency, drivers, residential care, Zimbabwe