

Mitigating risks for children in institutional care: A case study

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Abstract

There is currently a growing emphasis on the influence of early childhood experiences on overall wellbeing across the lifespan. Early childhood experiences have been at the core of the work done by Ububele, a non-profit organisation situated in Johannesburg. The organisation facilitates attachment-based interventions that aims to promote and support the emotional development of infants and children. This includes providing services to child and youth care institutions situated in the broader Johannesburg area. This paper aims to illustrate the psychodynamically orientated therapeutic relationship established with a three-year-old girl residing at one of these institutions. The paper will present clinical material to illustrate the challenges faced in response to the implications of probable trauma and neglect during infancy, as well as the systemic complexities and inadvertent relational trauma augmented by institutionalised care. This paper aims to contribute to the emergent knowledge base on relational trauma in response institutionalised care by illustrating a view that is pertinent to the South African context. Appropriate means of supporting caregivers and children in care may be effectively achieved only through a comprehensive understanding of the probable implications of institutionalised care in early childhood.